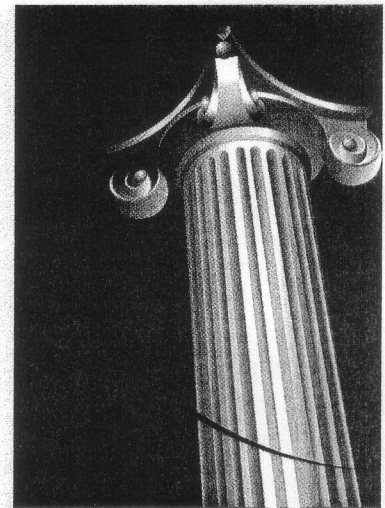


Qnotes

Pressing toward a higher mark

Quarterly Newsletter of the National Association of QMRPs



Volume IV • Number 2

Assuring Quality Services in Financially Troubling Times

By Tom Pomeranz • Missouri

These are financially troubling times in the human services industry! Staff layoffs, hiring freezes, equipment budgets slashed, referral lists for services growing etc, etc. all potentially eroding our ability to provide quality supports and services. This is the ideal time for managers, supervisors and clinicians to step up to the challenge and successfully overcome the financial constraints before them. The truth is that there are countless actions, which we can

and should initiate that are free or low cost that will significantly enhance the quality of life (QOL) for the individuals we support. For some supervisors and clinicians the financial challenges of the day serve as an inspiration - a motivation to identify creative and innovative strategies to improve services, thus eluding a potential decrease in QOL.

The good news is that for the most part, the quality of our services is found in the interaction of the support staff with those they support. The moment of staff interaction with support recipients is where the rubber meets the road, where the pen is put to paper and the needle touches the phonograph record. All else is secondary; the quality of that interaction is the defining moment.

Now more than ever, supervisors and clinicians must have a physical presence, to assure quality supports and services. We must have an on-site presence, coaching staff to enhance the quality of their interactions, as well as to promote supported routines. As coaches we can and must Model, Prompt, Support and Reinforce



Inside

4

Bush Pitches \$1.75 Billion Program
to get Americans out of institutional settings

7

Q-tips
Pre-recorded Audio Prompts helps dually diagnosed individuals get things done

8

What People Want in a Staff
An Interview

10

Book Review
Authentic Happiness

Continued on page 6

staff. If the coaching is to be effective it must occur while staff are engaged in providing supports. Unfortunately, the most critical times to coach may not always be our most preferred times. We must have a physical presence at support sites (residence, day and sheltered employment programs, etc.) at those times of the day and those days of the week in which the staff and the individuals being supported are most vulnerable. For example, wake up, dinner time, Saturday afternoons in many residential environments are among those periods that support staff require the most training and input. Training our staff in the environments where the support is delivered (In Place) and at those times the support is provided (Just In Time) is the most effective way we can enhance staff performance.

The role of QMRP's and other professionals is extremely demanding,

both on one's time as well as psychologically. Remember your personal life must come first! We must keep a balance between our work life and personal life. Keeping that balance communicates to the staff that we value ourselves and we are likely to value them. It's not how many hours we work; it is when we work them. The suggestion that more time be spent in a training/coaching role with our staff seems like yet another unreasonable requirement or demand. The truth is much of the time we currently devote in follow-up to: medication errors, allegations of neglect and abuse, Workers Compensation claims, Survey citations, injuries resulting from self injurious behavior, etc. could likely be preempted or minimized if we devoted more time to coaching the staff. Like many important issues in our life such as exercise, diet and maintaining friendships, a sacrifice is required; an investment in energy and time must be made. In these fiscally austere times who is going to train your staff on the quality of their interactions and supported routines if you don't do it?

Quality of interaction is assuredly the single most important element that defines quality of service. Asking permission before physically assisting someone in transferring, greeting others with a smile, respecting privacy, using age appropriate touch and voice are among the hallmarks of a quality service. How much does it cost for staff to demonstrate these behaviors? And here is the good news. The paramount QOL issues are FREE. Involving individuals in meal preparation, home chores, and self-care routines is also essen-


tial in assuring a QOL. How can the individuals we support have a QOL if they are not supported to participate? The challenges that many support staff face in actively involving individuals in their daily routines can only be overcome with coaching that is provided On-Site Just in Time.

Staff who believe that the individuals they support are either not capable or willing to participate, require the presence of a coach. Staff who contend that there is not sufficient time or adequate staffing, to involve individuals in their daily routines, require the presence of a coach. By using the four coaching strategies (Model, Prompt, Support and Reinforce) we can help staff learn to apply the techniques for promoting the active participation of all individuals in all their daily routines. In addition to enhancing staff performance, there is another impor-

tant benefit to coaching. Supervisors and clinicians who spend time coaching their staff, In Place- Just In Time, promote an improved relationship with their staff. Having a presence and coaching staff to improve their job performance says, "I care about you".

For many support staff these are trying times; a time when many organizations are freezing salary increases, requiring employees to increase their share of the health care premium and increasing the overall demands on support staff. The conditions are ripe in many organizations for deflated morale. The physical presence of supervisors or clinicians in a coaching role allows us to celebrate (Reinforce) the efforts and dedication of our staff. Yet another way to say, "we care about you - you are a valued employee".

Enhancing QOL is up to you. If you cannot devote 10 hours a week what about 8 hours, or 5 hours? Commit whatever time you can commit. Remember staff tend to resist management- but they are inspired by leadership. Acting as a coach is a sign of a leader.

Just make it happen! 

Tom Pomeranz is the President and CEO of Universal LifeStiles, providing training and consultation to agencies supporting people with disabilities. He is the creator and author of *The Principles and Practices of Universal Enhancement* (High Tide Press, 2001) To contact Dr. Pomeranz: 314.535.1027 (phone); 314.533.4790 (fax); tpomer@aol.com; www.universallifestiles.com

“Quality of interaction is assuredly the single most important element that defines quality of service.”