Quality Improvement Tips

Empowering Client & Families Advisors

Clients and families play an important role in any Quality Improvement (QI) initiative. Responsibilities can range from being an advisor to committee member to participants in focus groups and surveys. As you plan for engagement, consider these tips from various teams who have successfully implemented QI initiatives in their organization.

1. Educate your staff on your QI initiative. This way, staff can answer questions from clients or families, which is especially useful, when recruiting for committee members.

2. When recruiting clients and families, ask staff for help. Explain the required skills and characteristics you need and have them share the opportunity with those who may be a good fit. In-person recruitment is more effective than posters or brochures.

3. Strive to include client advisors who represent your client population.

4. Be clear and upfront about compensation with client advisors early in the process. Determine in advance if they will be compensated for their time, parking or other incurred expenses.

5. Create an onboarding plan. Ensure clients and families have the context, information and background needed at both a system and organizational level. Ensure everyone understands their role. Never lose sight of the pressures clients and families are managing. Support clients and families who may not be used to preparing for or sitting in meetings. Give them the time they need to feel confident.

6. Explain why you are taking on the quality improvement project and what success will look like. Illustrate the positive impacts by using client and family examples.

7. Manage triggers. Provide a space where client and family advisors feel safe and valued. Check in often to ensure they feel comfortable.

8. Create a committee with an equal number of staff and clients and treat all members equally. Develop a cohesive environment where you spend time to understand and connect at a compassionate level. Don't let the committee be solely task oriented.

9. Make it easy to participate, particularly for those who cannot attend in person. Consider what technology can be levered to ensure all members can participate.

10. Use plain language. Avoid jargon and provide client and family advisors with a glossary of acronyms for easy reference.

11. Throughout the project, reinforce how client and family input is making a difference.

12. Regularly express appreciation for the contribution clients and families make. Consider notes of appreciation or gift certificates to ensure they know their value to the work.

13. Publicly share and post information recognizing your QI efforts. Provide contact details for individuals to get more information if they are interested.

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Use the following tips when client and family advisors are ready to determine their role in the project. Check in with them on a regular basis to ensure they feel valued and satisfied with the project's progress. Here are a few ideas to think about. Consider including one mechanism where advisors share their feedback anonymously.

Create a feedback box where clients and families can drop questions or concerns anonymously.

and / or

Provide a survey at the end of each meeting to ensure client and family advisors feel valued and the work is making a difference.

and / or

Create a buddy/mentorship system where a staff member or peer is paired with clients.

and / or

Contact advisors before each meeting to review the agenda and key discussion points.

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