

**Colorado**  
**“Looking at Systemic Approaches to Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement”**  
**NASDDDS 2003 Annual Meeting**  
**November 12 – 14, 2003**

I. Colorado’s Program Quality Assurance System:

A. The Program Quality system in Colorado is designed to be a multi-faceted system and to involve all key players with responsibilities for the provision of services and supports. The Division for Developmental Disabilities (DDD) strongly believes that quality is “everyone’s business” and the system is purposely designed to have quality assurance responsibilities for the major providers of services. Individuals receiving services and supports, including their families, also play a key role in the Program Quality system in Colorado. The providers of services include:

1. Community Centered Boards (20)
2. Service Provider Agencies (200 +)
3. Regional Centers (3)

**Note 1:** The CCB system provides services to approximately 96% of persons with developmental disabilities who receive services in Colorado.

**Note 2:** The remaining 4% receive their services from State operated Regional Centers.

**Note 3:** Please refer to attachment entitled: “Organizational Overview” which depicts Colorado’s infrastructure of services and supports.

B. DDD also believes that the state must be accountable to persons receiving services, the public and its funding sources. In order to meet its obligations for accountability, DDD takes an active role in monitoring the services and supports funded through the developmental disabilities system and views its responsibilities for Program Quality to be many and varied. These responsibilities include the following broad categories:

1. Assuring that individuals are free from abuse, neglect, mistreatment and exploitation;
2. Protecting the rights of individuals and families;
3. Assuring that persons have access to necessary services;
4. Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of services;
5. Assuring accountability in the use of public funds; and
6. Assessing the performance of service providers.

C. DDD meets its responsibilities for quality assurance in a variety of ways. The different processes and methods utilized are listed below and detailed in the various sections of its Program Quality Manual.

1. Development of rules;
2. Development of standards, including interpretative guidelines;
3. Designation of Community Centered Boards;
4. Approval of Service Agencies;
5. Conduct of on-site surveys of Community Centered Boards/Case Management agencies;
6. Conduct of on-site surveys of programs;
7. Complaint investigations;
8. Review of critical incidents and deaths;
9. Consumer satisfaction surveys; and
10. Training and technical assistance.

II. Strategic Plan Development:

A. History: As the new state director in July, 2002, I was informed that:

1. In 1983, Colorado was one of the first states to strongly commit to employing the HCBS waiver program to support its citizens with developmental disabilities in the community. Over the last twenty years, this commitment has minimized the use of institutional ICF/MR services:
  - a. In 2002, 98.6% of all Coloradoans with developmental disabilities who received Medicaid long-term services participated in the HCBS waiver program; only 111 individuals were served in ICFs/MR.
  - b. Some 91.4% of Colorado expenditures were earmarked for HCBS versus 55.5% nationwide.
2. As result of participation in the Community Supported Living Arrangements program in the early 1990s, Colorado revamped its waiver programs to stress individual (and, when appropriate, family) selection of services and supports in order to improve the flexibility, relevancy and effectiveness of community services.

B. In October, 2002 the Division for Developmental Disabilities retained the services of the Human Services Research Institute for technical assistance relative to:

1. Incident Management; and
  2. Enhancing Consumer Choice.
- C. In July, 2003, a Strategic Plan for Colorado was developed and implemented. It evolved from the “Issue Paper: 2003” that summarized a myriad of issues, concerns and opportunities identified by the constituency of Colorado’s developmental disabilities service system. It represents central themes prioritized by the constituency, including federal and state mandates. Three needs, related to this presentation, were identified within the Strategic Plan and include:
1. Self-Determination: To explore, develop and implement a viable model(s) for individuals and families;
  2. Incident Tracking: To develop an effective statewide Critical Incident Tracking System; and
  3. Program Quality Framework: To develop recommendations for improving the design and implementation of Colorado Program Quality System.

### III. Program Quality Improvement:

- A. As a result of the above, Colorado submitted and received a CMS Real Choice System Change grant in the QA/QI in HCBS category. The grant is entitled: “Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement in Home and Community-Based Services for Colorado’s Citizens with Developmental Disabilities.”
- B. The goals of the project are twofold:
1. To use proven information technology to improve and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of Colorado’s quality assurance and quality improvement systems for HCBS waiver participants with developmental disabilities; and
  2. To promote the more active involvement of participants and families in HCBS QA/QI, through the use of Information Technology and other means.
- C. The project encompasses eight objectives to secure significant and sustainable improvements in QA/QI for Colorado citizens with developmental disabilities:

1. To define a more comprehensive, organization-specific set of performance measures to serve as the basis for quality improvement. These measures will focus attention across the system on critical performance dimensions and provide the basis for standard information on providers that will be made available to participants and their families;
2. To standardize critical elements of direct participant surveys conducted by CCBs, private providers and DDD, the DDD family survey presently being developed, critical incident reports, and annual regulatory surveys for statewide application in order to create a richer base of information to support quality improvement more efficiently;
3. To acquire and adapt one of a number of existing web-based incident reporting systems developed in other states for the timely reporting of standardized incident information to DDD to support needed action, analysis, and improvement;
4. To purchase and implement an automated data capture system that will scan consumer and family survey forms and regulatory survey forms into computer readable form in order to yield more timely results more efficiently;
5. To establish a web-based resource for participants and families to provide information on system navigation, provider offerings and performance, and other resources in support of participants and to inform choice;
6. To build a web-based “suggestion box” and rapid response system to encourage direct, unfiltered feedback from and positively engage participants, families, community workers, and others in the Colorado DD community in support of quality improvement;
7. To provide education and training materials designed to promote quality on the web in downloadable form in order to facilitate access and encourage wider use; and
8. To assist self-advocate and family advocacy groups around the state to grow, organize and actively involve themselves in training, survey and other quality improvement activities through technical assistance, cash and in-kind support.

IV. Concluding Remarks: It’s our intent and desire that fulfilling the above grant objectives, will enable Colorado’s Program Quality Framework and the developmental disabilities service system to:

- A. Be more responsive and informative to individuals and families who want to exercise more choice over their services and supports by having access to real time data;
- B. Be more responsive and informative to providers of services by having access to real time data;
- C. Enhance the Program Quality Review process by accessing a centralized statewide database;
- D. Analyze the data base and identify trends related to Critical Incidents; and
- E. Provide an improved communication link with individuals, families and providers as Colorado implements its Self-Determination model.

### **References**

**“Issue Paper: 2003”**, Division for Developmental Disabilities, Office of Adult, Disability and Rehabilitation Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, March 2003;

**“Program Quality Manual”**, Division for Developmental Disabilities, Office of Adult, Disability and Rehabilitation Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, November 2002;

**“Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement in Home and Community-Based Services for Colorado’s Citizens with Developmental Disabilities”**, Office of Adult, Disability and Rehabilitation Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, August 2003;

**“Strategic Plan: 2003 – 2008 for the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Service System”**, Office of Adult, Disability and Rehabilitation Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, July 1, 2003