Organizational Analysis

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Organizational Environment

My field placement is at Macomb Family Services in the Early Learning Communities. Macomb Family Services has three departments: Early Learning Communities, Mental Health, and Corporate. These departments offer many services, such as substance abuse prevention, individual and family counseling, domestic violence/anger management, social emotional consultants, provider trainings, and a program called Play and Learn. I work with social workers in my department to provide social emotional consulting services to children in Macomb County between the ages of 2-5. We provide home visiting services for families in addition to school consultations. We also facilitate Positive Solutions workshops around the community to teach parents positive solutions to challenging behavior. Our program exists under two different grants: one that provides services to the entire county of Macomb, and another that is zip code-specific to allow for more resources to be focused on lower income areas of Macomb such as Warren. Each grant employs one social worker to focus on that area but the zip code-specific grant has two part-time social workers instead of a full-time employee. The MSW student intern and I are both supervised by one of the part-time social workers.

The external environment of the Early Learning Communities department has some opportunities and threats to the success of the programs. As an overall agency, Macomb Family Services has a positive reputation within the county. Both providers and parents have normally heard of our agency when we do outreach and are willing to talk to us about our services. Preschools and daycares within the county often refer their problematic families to our department and are willing to allow us to do classroom observations. Preschool and elementary school principals often reach out to our department hoping to sponsor a Positive Solutions workshop at their location. While Early Learning Communities has several opportunities there are also some threats to the success of the programs. The area around the main office does not have public transportation which is problematic to clients without reliable transportation. To reverse this problem the department offers off-campus services such as Play and Learns at local schools and home visiting services through the social emotional consultant program. Since the programs are still fairly new, connections have not yet been made at some daycares and preschools which mean that some of the population does not have access to our services. Another threat to the success of the department, as referred to in Appendix A, is the low attendance to Positive Solutions workshops in the Warren area. The outreach and advertising of these workshops has not been effective in this part of county which causes workshops to continually get canceled from low attendance. Lastly, only children that participate in daycare or preschool are referred to our department which means that children who are kept home will not have access to the services.

The internal environment of my internship agency is quite different from the external environment. There is a lot of conflict between the director of Early Learning Communities and the other employees within the department because of a lack of communication. Many of the employees’ complaints are centered on her micromanaging their programs. There is also a lack of communication between the workers within the same programs which is problematic because a lot of outreach gets done multiple times for no reason. There are sometimes arguments within the social emotional development program over taking clients outside of their own assigned area of Macomb. Recently three of the women announced that they are pregnant which has also caused some worries within the agency since they will all be leaving around the same time. Another weakness of the department is that there seems to be a disconnect between what the agency leadership wants and what the client-interacting employees see as the need of the community. A strength of the department is that there is an unspoken rule that when someone goes into the break room for lunch everyone else takes a break from their work and joins them. No one sits at their desk alone which is awesome since I have heard this happens at a lot of other agencies. Even when someone does not have a lot of time that day they will still take at least a 15 minute break to relax with everyone. The internal environment of the Early Learning Community department at Macomb Family Services has been characterized by miscommunication and tension in the last few months due to the loss of a major grant. However, there is still a sense of community between all the employees even when there are problems.

Mission and Goals

The mission statement of Macomb Family Services is “to enhance the health and well-being of others, and promote social and personal change. We provide a wide range of family related counseling, residential, and home/community based services to the residents of Macomb County and surrounding communities. Our staff is dedicated to providing superior programs that will improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and the community (Macomb Family Services).” Macomb Family Services goals and objectives are to “provide hope and change the lives of those we service. We achieve this by acting as one family and one community, dedication in providing personalize quality service, promoting diversity, and to strive to exceed expectations set before us. Our vision is to be recognized as the model family service agency in the state of Michigan (Macomb Family Services).” The goals were determined by the CEO and the directors from each department over fifty years ago. The agency was originally formed because there was a need for services north of fourteen mile road in Macomb, yet my department focuses instead on families in southern Macomb. The needs of the county have changed and now southern Macomb needs more resources which are where most of the grant money now goes. The main offices for the mental health department are also in southern Macomb which also does not align with the original vision of the agency. Also due to recent budget cuts as a result of lost grant money, several programs have been shut down, and there has been major downsizing. The original residential services no longer exist and have been replaced by services, such as first aid workshops, designed to generate an income.

Organizational Structure

There are three official levels of leadership within the MFS Early Learning Community: intern, program employee, and department director. The informal organizational structure is that each program has a program leader but essentially everyone answers to the director of the department. The leaders of each program are supposed to assign tasks and act as managers of their program; however, they do not actually have any power, only the director truly has influence over the employees. The formal organizational structure, as shown in Appendix B, includes four programs that all report to the Director of the Early Learning Community department. These three programs are social emotional consulting, Play and Learn’s, and provider trainings. I believe that the informal organization structure is a result of the formal organizational structure being unrealistic for one person to handle.

The theoretical leanings of leadership influence all the power and control into the director’s responsibility. Although there are informal leaders of each program they do not really have any power. When there is a problem or conflict they are required to take it to the director so that she can solve it which takes away their influence on their programs. The Early Learning Community has many strong connections with well-established agencies in the community such as Leaps and Bounds. The Macomb county early childhood service agencies all commonly refer clients to each other and often communicate in meetings every few months. Within Macomb Family Services there is no mention of any other departments. There is no communication between any of the lower level employees with other departments. There has been a phone issue that has gone unresolved for over six months now because the director of Mental Health and the director of Early Learning Communities have not communicated. Two employees one from each department have the same extension but nothing has been done to change this even though it has confused and frustrated several clients. Due to this lack of communication I was unable to find out a lot about what the other agencies do and how they run things.

Evaluation and Performance Review

Macomb Family Services Early Learning Communities evaluates its impact on our targeted community through several evaluation tools. When clients receive services at the office, such as a Play and Learn, they are given an evaluation of services form which asks them about their experiences. This form questions the clients about what they liked and did not like and what they thought was the most helpful part of the services. The provider trainer program also uses an evaluation of services form to assess how much the providers felt they learned from the classes and workshops they attended. Another evaluation tool that the social emotional development program uses is the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA). They assess the children’s DECA scores before and after to see if there is any significant change in their social emotional development. In both the Play and Learn and social emotional development programs the assessment tool Ages Through Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is used to assess a child’s overall development to see what potential resources they made need access to.

The leadership within our agency promotes self-care to all of the employees. At the beginning of every team meeting, we start off with a fun ice breaker that is meant to also be a bonding activity. Our agency held a self-care day around the holidays where they bought us lunch, brought in a masseuse, and held lessons in crocheting. Another aspect of the agency that promotes employee productivity is the unspoken rule of every employee taking a lunch break away from their desk. The leadership measures our effectiveness by keeping track of how many clients are given services through each program. The main objective of the grant is to impact as many people in the county as possible therefore the number of people receiving services is the main objective of measuring our effectiveness.

Diversity

Macomb Family Services Early Learning Community serves the diverse community of South Macomb. However, the agency itself has a total of fourteen employees and interns, nine of which are white women. I believe this is a weakness within the agency because the clients do not work with service providers that are diverse. I also find the lack of men at the agency a weakness because we do not get many male clients who seek our services and I believe that this may be caused by the lack of men working there. Furthermore, all positions of leadership at my organization are held by white women.

The minority women at Macomb Family Services have positions in the Early Childhood Development department as child care providers at parenting events and administrative assistants. I have not seen any other employees from different departments so I cannot comment on the entire agency’s diversity. The populations that we serve are mainly black, however we only have one black woman who works at the agency. Of the four social workers in the Early Learning Community, three are white women and one is Hispanic. This is a weakness of the social emotional development program because there is little diversity to represent the population that seeks resources.

Macomb Family Services treats all the clients and providers with respect. The clients have little interaction with the main leadership position within our department. Some of the schools have had issues with the main leadership in the social emotional development program that I intern within. I am not sure the exact reason because it happened prior to me starting at the agency but that leadership is very blunt about when a teacher is causing harm to a student so I am assuming that there may have been an incident relating to this. Despite this, all the interactions between employees and clients that I have witnessed at the agency have been respectful and professional.

Change

The change that I would propose for my internship is a change in the balance of power and control. There needs to be more power given to the leaders of each program so that more can be accomplished without the delay of having to communicate with an additional person. There also needs to be a better way of communicating within the department so that employees can use the other programs as resources for their clients and providers. Another change I would make is not splitting the one job under the zip code grant into two-part time jobs. This was originally done to recruit the person who the job was created for since she was a retired social worker who did not want to completely commit her time to the position. While it worked at the time, the communication is not consistent enough within the agency to be able to support the splitting of this position anymore.

References

Macomb Family Services website (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.mfsonline.org/index.php>

Appendix A

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|  | **Helpful**  to achieving the objective | **Harmful**  to achieving the objective |
| **Internal origin**  (attributes of the system) | *Strengths*   * Emphasis on self-care * Friendly staff members * Clients often access multiple resources through the department * Lunch bonding together as a department | *Weaknesses*   * Lack of communication with leadership * Micromanaging/frustrated employees * Lack of power that program leaders have * Practice differs from program purpose/strategies * Splitting of full-time jobs into part-time jobs * Lack of diversity in the staff |
| **External origin** (attributes of the environment) | *Opportunities*   * County emphasis on Kindergarten readiness * Close connection with other services such as Leaps and Bounds * Several grants funding programs especially the additional South Macomb funding * Positive relationships with several preschools and teachers * Good reputation within the Macomb community * Safe/well lit location | *Threats*   * Home visiting risks to social workers * Lack of public transportation to office * Programs don’t have connections at every preschool or daycare in the county yet * Low attendance at Positive Solution workshops by community * Not reaching the children that aren’t involved in a daycare or preschool |

Appendix B

