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Supervisor Forum: Communicating Changes
April 11 and 12, 2023
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PCANY Facilitators: Carmen Rosario, Samantha Fields, Ellen Butowsky
27 programs (between 1-4 supervisors from each program):
Cortland, Wyoming/Genesee, Rockland, Parkchester, Chautauqua, Cayuga, Jefferson/Lewis, Albany, Brookdale, Broome, Madison, Washington Heights, Rensselaer, Delaware, Sullivan, Ontario/Yates/Seneca, Chemung, Steuben/Livingston, Schuyler/Tompkins, Morris Heights, Schenectady, Niagara, Owsego, Tioga, Herkimer, Sunset Park, Dutchess

Rationale for topic: Given the volume and pace of recent changes in our state system, this forum centered around the significance of effectively communicating change both to supervisors and with those they supervise. This was an opportunity for supervisors to share insights and experiences on this topic, as well as to solicit ideas for CA's consideration regarding how change is communicated.

Large Group Discussion:
How are changes communicated to you as supervisors? (Timing, mechanism of communication, ability to feel competent and comfortable with the new approaches)
- Most supervisors shared that their PM is the person who communicates changes to them, and that some changes are communicated directly to staff via the MIS.
- The majority of supervisors indicated that they do not hear about changes with enough advance notice to feel confident in supporting staff. One supervisor said she has the experience of coming into work to find staff "stressed" because they've been on their computers and seen a change has been made. She feels unable to support them because she hasn't even seen the update.
- One supervisor shared that some changes sometimes seem "so small" but actually take a lot of work to integrate into practice. She shared it would be easier if there was context offered. "We need the 'why'. Without it, it's hard as a supervisor to explain and support the changes." Another supervisor said, "It's hard to connect the changes to how something is best for families and programs if we don't fully understand it."
- One supervisor said sometimes she feels like she's explaining things with "because we have to."
- New policies come out and "I don't have time to read through them. They sit in my in-box because I just can't get to them."

When changes are made at your site, how are the changes received by staff? How do you manage challenging reactions to change?
- Lately staff has felt frustrated, especially new staff who just learned something one way (CHEERS, the HV narrative) then to have to learn it a different way now. "It was fine before, why the change?"
- It's harder for staff who have been here longer to adjust to the changes. For newer staff, they never knew anything different, more tenured staff remember when there was less paperwork.
- One supervisor said she uses Feel, Name and Tame to give them room to express their feelings about the changes and to help them move forward in a positive way.

How do you help staff understand the reasons behind changes?
- Putting it in the context of "we're growing, and that's a good thing, and that's why these changes are necessary."
- "I share the facts when I have them and feel able to."

- Some said they use reports and data to offer a visual of why the change will be helpful.
- A supervisor said she tries to be real and say she may "not have the answers and this change may not work for you. I sit with the resistance."

Break out questions:
- What are the most common changes that you have experienced within your program and how have they affected you?
- How are tasks related to policies and procedures shared?
- How do you think we can better prepare staff members for changes within the program? What are some strategies that we can use to help staff members adapt to changes in the program more easily and involve them in the process?

Ideas shared back in large group from break outs groups (asked to share one thing that stood out)
Ideas for programs:
- Share changes in writing first with your team, then have a meeting to go over the changes
- Use reflective strategies to deal with challenging reactions
- Use data to help staff understand rationale
- Create a Price As Right or Jeopardy style game to make learning about the changes fun
- Focus on time-management with staff
- Show the Supervisor CHEERS Support Call to all staff in a team meeting. One site did this and said it was very helpful. Some expressed they understand the rationale for waiting (so the questions are deeper) they would like the FSS Support call to be sooner than June.

Ideas for CA:
- Have one program from each region look at MIS changes in advance of publishing them, when timing permits. This could avoid what happened with the CHEERS documentation recently.
- Have a "cross walk" included with each new policy so we know what's old and what is new, or at a minimum highlight the changes in a different color to make it easier to know what to focus on.
- Supervisors stressed they need 2-3 months lead time so they can learn what they need to know, or at least some "warning" sent direct to them so they're not hearing at same time as staff.
- Ideas (from Research/Evaluation team?) about reports or research to share with staff to set the context or offer a visual about the changes.
- Wondered if supervisors could hear directly about upcoming changes and not via PMs.
- Schedule Support Calls with supervisors before changes are rolled out.

Resources Shared:
Updated HV Log Guidelines
https://tol397.wixsite.com/transferoflearning/supportmaterials
CHEERS Support Call
https://tol397.wixsite.com/transferoflearning/supportcalls
TOL Calendar
https://tol397.wixsite.com/transferoflearning/hfnycalendar

Next forum will be different than usual format. It will be "Office Hours" on the Service Plan- July 10 from 10-11:00. Will include representatives from all 3 branches of CA.