

HEALTHY FAMILIES NEW YORK

PCANY Training and Staff Development PROTOCOL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE VISITS

Revised July 21, 2017

For the purpose of Home Visitor (FAW and FSW) and Supervisor quality assurance, PCANY trainers will visit HFNY program sites regularly to observe practice and offer support for staff and program development. The importance of practice observations is to maintain focus on home visitor and supervisor competencies, and the relationships between those roles and with families in the “Parallel Process.” Sites can expect QA visits to involve two days at the program site, with one day of practice observations and one day of Site Support (see Site Support Plan, below). Although the frequency of visits may vary from year-to-year, depending on state system, training team and program needs, both FSW and FAW QA visits occur approximately every 24 months.

NEWLY TRAINED FAWs AND SUPERVISORS

To attend to the professional development of newly trained FAWs and Supervisors, FAW Core and Supervisor Core concludes with trainees setting professional goals. Post-core reunion calls are scheduled for trainees and their trainer. These occur one month after core for Supervisors, and two months after core for FAWs. The calls offer new supervisors and FAWs, who often work in relative isolation, the opportunity to reflect on their work in a structured and supported way, and to continue to build on their network of professional support that formed during core training. Participants recall and report on the goals they set at the conclusion of core, and they discuss successes and challenges they are facing in their work. The trainer provides further consultation with trainees, their supervisors and/or Program Managers, and the Director of Training and Staff Development, as needed to maximize professional development.

ARRANGING AND SCHEDULING QA VISITS

At the beginning of each contract year, the Director of Training will assign FSW and FAW QA Specialists to provide QA visits to sites. Efforts are made to continue these assignments from year to year so that the work will benefit from continuous relationships between sites and their QA visitors. If an assignment changes, the Director and the Specialist assigned will determine how the site will be informed. This will occur early in the contract year to let them know who their visitor will be, the approximate month the visit is to occur, and to review the QA protocol and answer any questions the Program Manager might have about the assignment or the process.

QA Specialists will contact Program Managers to schedule QA visits. The QA Specialist will inform her/his direct supervisor, the other QA Specialist assigned to the program, and the Program Associate of the date(s) for the visit. The Program Associate will put this on the calendar. The QA Specialist will send an email to the Program Manager confirming the visit, as well as the forms that will be used for observations, with a copy to the OCFS Program Contract Manager (PCM). This letter outlines the purpose of the visit and explains the procedure. The Program Manager is responsible for explaining the QA visit to the staff ahead of time and sharing the observation forms with them.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

Once the visit date is confirmed, the QA Specialist will access the most recent, relevant MIS reports created by the Center for Human Services Research (CHSR) as well as any other reports from the web-based MIS that may be useful for the visit, and will use the reports to inform planning.

The QA Specialists will contact OCFS Program Contract Managers and initiate a conversation to share any strengths and challenges of the site that will receive a visit.

The QA Specialist will request a staff list from the Program Manager, and will *randomly select* the FSW or FAW who will be observed. Cross-trained staff are included in this list when they are at least 50% FTE in the role to be observed. The Specialist will notify the manager of staff selected at least three weeks prior to the date of the visit.

Note: For some sites it will be important to let the QA Specialist know if the home visit or assessment is likely to be with a non-English-speaking family, as generally, QA visits are conducted by Specialists who are not fluent in other languages. While QA Specialists are able to observe visits and assessments that are conducted in a language in which they are not fluent and much can be gained from this, our experience shows that the QA process is most beneficial when visits and assessments are conducted in a language in which the Specialist is fluent.

The Program Manager (or designated Supervisor) will inform the staff members that they have been selected for observation, and orient them ahead of time to the purpose and process of the visit, and to the observation forms the Specialist will use. In addition, the Program Manager (or designated Supervisor) is responsible for insuring that specific home visits, assessments, and supervisions to be observed are scheduled, and that the families selected for the observation of practice have consented to having their visit observed. *For the families, visit observation is totally voluntary.*

The Program Manager (or designated Supervisor) assists the home visitor in preparing the families ahead of time, including preparing the visitors to introduce the observer to the family. The Program Manager may use the handout sent in the confirmation packet: “How to introduce the PCANY observer” and arranging back-up observations. *We recommend that at least one back-up visit be arranged for every home visit and assessment, in the event of cancellation or no-show by the family.*

Prior to the visit, the QA Specialist will schedule phone calls with the home visitor and Supervisor who will be observed. These calls provide the staff to be observed the opportunity to reflect on their work.

Questions asked by the QA Specialist can include:

- What is going well?
- What are your strengths?
- What improvements or changes in your practice are you interested in working toward?
- Is there anything specific you would like me to focus on during the observation?
- How is your work engaging fathers or (for supervisors) supporting staff to engage fathers at all levels of their work?

For FSWs:

- Anything specific related to the FGP, PCI, and curriculum that you’d like to share?

For FAWs:

- What do you generally know beforehand about the families you assess, and in what ways does this information inform your approach to the assessment?

For Supervisors:

- What do you see in the MIS and from your last quarterly report that might relate to this observation?

This information will help the QA Specialist tailor feedback and observations to each individual.

PREPARATION FOR SITE SUPPORT

Content of site support is standardized based upon information learned about direct practice and statewide training needs, individual sites’ needs and requests, information learned about the site through the quality assurance system, direct feedback from programs, OCFS PCM site visits, and staff response to training events. The QA Specialist will arrange a conversation with the PCM and the PM to review the standard outline and to individualize/prioritize the topics based on the site’s needs and interests.

Following the planning discussions, the QA Specialist will draft an agenda for the visit and send it to the Program Manager before the visit. The agenda will include the dates of the visit, the Specialist's arrival time, times for the observations, times when the Specialist will be reviewing notes in preparation for debriefing, times for debriefing, who should be present for various activities, and timeframes for site support activities.

Note: Typically, the QA Specialist will ask for times to meet privately with the Program Manager, usually upon arrival on-site and before departing at the end of the QA visit.

CONDUCTING THE VISIT

The Specialist will begin the day by having a brief, private discussion with the Program Manager to review any questions or concerns the Program Manager may have, get an overview of the community being served, review recent MIS reports and program performance, and review the agenda for the visit, including plans for observations and feedback.

The FSW QA Specialist will observe a home visit and FSW supervision. The FAW QA Specialist will observe an assessment and FAW supervision.

Both FSW and FAW Specialists will offer a verbal debrief of the home visit and supervision session. Debriefing of observations takes place with the FSW, FAW, and the Supervisor and the PM present. During debrief of the supervision observation, it is expected that the Supervisor and the Supervisor's direct supervisor will be present. If for some reason all parties cannot be present, the QA Specialist will make arrangements for a follow-up phone call for feedback when all parties can participate. *With the exception of providing brief, behaviorally specific positive reinforcement, QA Specialists do not provide detailed feedback to the observed staff person unless their direct supervisor is present.*

QA Specialists need time to prepare for face-to-face feedback. Because of the demanding schedule for the Specialist, it is requested that the program help explore lunch options at or near the site, as well as provide a space for the Specialist to work and meet privately with staff.

OBSERVATION OF SUPERVISION

One supervision will be observed during each QA visit. The ideal arrangement is for the QA Specialist to observe supervision of the same staff member observed during the assessment or home visit.

USE OF VIDEOTAPE FOR OBSERVATIONS OF MUTUAL COMPETENCE

QA specialists and Program Managers may decide to use taped home visits and

supervisions for practice observation. This strategy has many benefits including efficient use of time by eliminating travel to and from visits, and eliminating the challenge of no-show visits. But most importantly, use of videotape creates the opportunity for the home visitor and supervisor to view, review and reflect on their own work before, during and after the QA visit. This review, especially when supported by the QA specialist and program supervisors, and staff's use of PCANY observation documentation, deepens the experience of reflection on the work, and maximizes the potential for professional development because they have "seen it with their own eyes and named it with their own words."

*If this option is exercised, guidance for taping and reviewing the tape will be provided by the QA Specialist, and a detailed review of the video and the staff person's observations will take place at the QA visit, typically in lieu of a live observation of practice.

**As there is not an existing relationship with families to be assessed, it is not recommended that sites use videotape for the FAW observation.

QA VISIT DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of QA visits will be completed within 60 days of the conclusion of the visit, and reviewed by the Director of Training or designee. Final documentation will be in PDF format, and will include a letter summarizing the visit and all observation forms. The letter and all accompanying documentation must be based on observations, not inferences or interpretations. All documentation will focus on strengths as well as areas for further skill development.

Documentation will be emailed to the Program Manager, OCFS Program Contract Manager, HFNY Unit Manager, and PCANY Director of Training and Staff Development.

FOLLOW-UP

After the visit, QA Specialists and Program Managers or Supervisors have a follow-up phone call to discuss any aspect of the visit, including ways to support the professional development of staff that was observed. Ideally, this will occur after receiving the QASS follow up feedback form.

After the Program Manager has reviewed the written documentation from the visit, she or he reviews it with those involved in the observations and this is indicated by completing the information in the box at the end of each QA observation form. She or he is also asked to complete the QA Follow-up Feedback Form and return it within ten days to the Director of Training. The follow-up form is the formal means through which HFNY collects information and feedback on the QA process. The follow-up form is also the place where the Program Manager is asked to identify what will be done within the program to address the feedback from the visit.