

## **HEALTHY FAMILIES NEW YORK**

### **PCANY Training and Staff Development PROTOCOL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE VISITS**

**Revised March 2019**

For the purpose of Family Resource Specialist (FRS), Family Support Specialist (FSS), and Supervisor quality assurance, PCANY Quality Assurance (QA) specialists will visit Healthy Families New York (HFNY) program sites regularly to observe practice and offer support for staff and program development. These practice observations affirm and strengthen home visitor and supervisor competencies, and underline the impact of the “parallel process” in the relationships between these roles and participating families. 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” below). PCANY is contracted to provide FRS and FSS QA visits approximately every 24 months. While program and PCANY staff considerations are acknowledged, efforts are made to alternate FRS and FSS visits so that one occurs each contract year.

#### **NEWLY TRAINED FAMILY RESOURCE SPECIALISTS AND SUPERVISORS**

To attend to the professional development of newly trained Family Resource Specialists and Supervisors, FRS and Supervisor Core trainings conclude with trainees setting professional goals. Post-core calls are scheduled for trainees and their trainer. These occur approximately one month after core for supervisors, and approximately two months after core for FRSs. The calls offer new supervisors and FRSs, 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 Training and Staff Development Director will review the assignment of FRS and FSS QA Specialists to programs. Efforts are made to continue relationships between programs and their QA visitors from year to year because of the benefits of continuous relationships between programs 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. QA Specialists also e-mail the OCFS Program Contract Manager (PCM) to let them know when the visit will occur and ask if there is anything they want to share or discuss.

When a program has multiple sites, the QA Specialist and Program Manager will discuss if it makes sense to rotate visits to the different sites. This is discussed in advance of each visit as there may be staffing considerations that impact which site is visited. When possible, programs are asked to identify families who would not require travelling over 30 minutes so that there is sufficient time for the feedback session back at the office.

The QA Specialist will send an email to the Program Manager confirming the visit, as well as the forms and related information that will be used for observations. The Program Manager is responsible for explaining the QA visit to the staff ahead of time and sharing the observation forms and other documents with them. These include pre-visit phone call questions and ideas for how to introduce the visitor to families.

#### 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 Specialist will request a staff list from the Program Manager, and will *randomly select* the FRS or FSS who will be observed, typically those working at least 50% in the role to be observed. In order to support skill maintenance of cross-trained staff, after exploration with the Program Manager about what would best meet the needs of the program, staff functioning less than 50% in that role may also be selected. The Specialist will notify the manager of staff selected at least three weeks prior to the date of the visit.

*Note: For some programs it will be important to let the QA Specialist know if the home visit or parent survey is likely to be with a non-English-speaking family. While some QA Specialists speak other languages, generally, QA visits are conducted by Specialists who are not fluent in other languages. While QA*

*Specialists are able to observe home visits 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 home visits are conducted in a language in which the Specialist is fluent. Due to the nature of the Parent Survey visit, FRS observations must be conducted in a language in which the Specialist is conversant.*

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 the specific home visits, parent survey visits, 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 FRS or FSS in preparing the families ahead of time, including preparing the visitors to introduce the observer to the family. The Program Manager is encouraged to provide staff with “Guidelines for Introducing the PCANY Specialist” included at the end of this document. *We recommend that at least one back-up visit be arranged for every home visit and parent survey in the event of cancellation or no-show by the family.*

Prior to the visit, the QA Specialist will schedule phone calls with the FRS or FSS and supervisor who will be observed. These calls provide the staff to be observed the opportunity to reflect on their work, and an opportunity to ask questions about the visit. The QA Specialist will send a list of possible questions to the staff selected for observation (included at the end of this document under “Pre-Visit Reflection Questions”). The information gathered on this phone call will help the QA Specialist tailor feedback and observations to each individual.

PCANY observations of home visits, parent survey visits and supervision sessions may not be used to meet the program’s internal QA requirements.

#### SITE SUPPORT

Content of site support is standardized based upon information learned about direct practice and statewide training needs, information learned about the site through the quality assurance system, direct feedback from programs, OCFS PCM site visits, and staff response to training events.

Following the phone call with the Program Manager 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. It will also include times to meet with the Program Manager at the start and end of each day.

### CONDUCTING THE VISIT

The QA 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, to check-in on how staff are feeling about the observations, and to review the agenda for the visit, including plans for observations and feedback. It may include a general update on the program from the Program Manager, a review of recent MIS reports and a discussion of program performance.

The FRS QA Specialist will observe a parent survey and FRS supervision. The FSS QA Specialist will observe a home visit and FSS supervision.

Both FRS and FSS Specialists will facilitate a verbal debrief of the parent survey/home visit and supervision session. The direct supervisor of the observed staff person must be present for the debriefing to occur. We strongly encourage the Program Manager be present for both debriefings. If for some reason all required parties cannot be present, efforts will be made to have the debriefing with all required parties on the second day. If this cannot occur, 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. It is requested that the program 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 VIDEO FOR OBSERVATIONS

QA Specialists and program staff may decide to use videos of 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 video 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. It maximizes the potential for professional development because staff have "seen it" with their own eyes and named it with their own words.

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

\*\*As there is not an existing relationship with families receiving a Parent Survey visit, we do not use video for the FRS observation.

### QA VISIT DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of QA visits will be completed within 45 days of the conclusion of the visit, and reviewed by the QA Specialist's supervisor. Final documentation will be in PDF format and will include a cover letter, a write up of observations, and a summary of activities. All documentation is based on objective observation, not inferences or interpretations, and focuses on staff's strengths and areas for further skill development. We recognize that professional growth is a collaborative process. For this reason, our documentation includes references to conversations with all parties related to skill building and professional development that occurred during the debriefing.

Documentation will be emailed to the Program Manager, OCFS Program Contract Manager, HFNY Unit Manager, the PCANY Training and Staff Development Director, and the QA Specialist's supervisor.

### FOLLOW-UP

After the Program Manager has reviewed the written documentation from the visit, she or he assures that the direct supervisor of the observed staff reviews it with them. This is indicated by completing the information in the box at the end of each QA observation form. This Follow-Up Plan draws on the ideas for professional development offered in the documentation, the debriefing conversation and/or resources that were included.

Within 30 days of receiving the documentation, QA Specialists and Program Managers (and supervisors if requested) have a follow-up phone call to discuss any aspect of the visit, including the QASS feedback form, QA observation Follow-Up Plans, to support the professional development of observed staff, and the Site Support Training, to support attendees' integration of the material shared. Program Managers are encouraged to reflect on how the learning from the visit can be extrapolated to broader program practice. The QASS feedback form is the formal means through which HFNY collects information and feedback on the QA process. The feedback 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. QA/SS Feedback forms are submitted by Program Managers before the call date so that QA Specialists can prepare to discuss this information on the call.

## **PRE-VISIT REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **Family Resource Specialist**

1. What is going well in assessing families?
2. What challenges have there been and what improvements are you interested in working toward?
3. How has your work been going in engaging fathers/the child's other parent in the assessment process? What have you noticed is working? What have been your challenges?
4. What would you like me to focus on in my observation and feedback?

### **Family Resource Specialist Supervisor**

1. What strengths do you see in the FRS?
2. Are there any challenges that the FRS is experiencing?
3. How comfortable are you with conducting QA activities with the FRS – content reviews, parent survey observations, inter-rater reliability? How has this work been going?
4. What professional development activities have been helpful for the FRS? (example: FRS TOL workbook activities, shadowing, your QA activities, etc.)
5. What would you like me to focus on in my observation and feedback?

### **Family Support Specialist**

1. What is going well in your work with families?
2. What has been challenging in your work with families? What improvements are you interested in working toward?
3. What activities and discussion topics does the Service Plan contain for the family to be observed? How is it going with integrating these into your work with the family?
4. What are the FGP goals of the family to be observed? How are you working with them toward achieving their goals?

5. What parenting curriculum and section will be used with the observed family to support PCI and/or encourage child development?
6. What successes and challenges have you had with engaging fathers/the child's other parent?
7. What do you want to accomplish in the visit with the family that I will be observing?
8. What would you like me to focus on in my observation and feedback?

**Family Support Specialist Supervisor**

1. What is going well in your supervision of FSSs?
2. What has been challenging? What improvements are you interested in working towards?
3. How is it going with developing Service Plans and integrating them into your work?
4. What is the FSS's understanding of the rationale and process for creating a Family Goal Plan with the family?
5. What parenting curriculum is the FSS using? What strengths and challenges are you working on in supervision related to the FSS's use of curricula?
6. What successes and challenges has the FSS had with engaging fathers/child's other parent?
7. What do you want to accomplish in the supervision with the FSS?
8. What would you like me to focus on in my observation and feedback?



## **GUIDELINES FOR INTRODUCING THE PCANY QA SPECIALIST**

I'm looking forward to observing your parent survey or home visit. As we discussed over the phone, the following guidelines will help everyone feel more comfortable with the observation.

How to refer to me when you introduce me to the family:

- Please introduce me as “from Healthy Families New York.”
- Be sure not to refer to me as being “from Prevent Child Abuse NY” because the words “Child Abuse” are in our organization’s name. This can be unsettling for families.
- Prevent Child Abuse New York is a small not-for-profit organization. I am not “from the state.”

To share with families **in advance and again at the beginning** of our visit:

- The focus of the observation will be on the staff person and not directly on the family.
- Other than greeting the family and thanking them at the end of the visit, the observer will not be participating in the visit or interacting directly with the family. The observer will be like a “fly on the wall.”
- If at all possible, it is helpful for the observer to sit on a chair placed so as not to be in the middle of your interaction with the family.
- The observer will be taking notes throughout the visit on what the home visitor does and says, and some notes about how the family seems to respond. These notes do not contain personal information shared by the family.