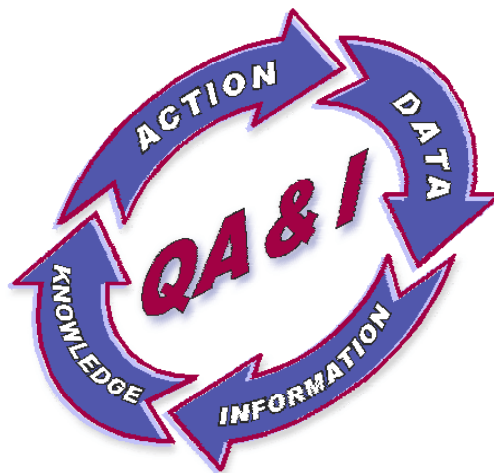


**Iowa Department of Human Services**



**Quality Assurance and Improvement  
Annual Report for 2007**



**IMPROVING RESULTS FOR  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**



## 2007 Quality Assurance and Improvement Annual Report

### Introduction and Background

This report provides an overview of the Quality Assurance and Improvement initiative and activities for FY 2007 for the Department of Human Services and reflects the continued commitment of DHS to continuously review and improve outcomes for people we serve.

The Department developed its Quality Assurance and Improvement (QA&I) initiative based on recommendations made during the federal Child and Family Service Review and as an element of the Department's Child Welfare Redesign efforts in 2003, called "*Better Results for Kids*".

During the past year, QA&I has contributed to many program areas and contributed at both local and statewide levels. At least in part due to the recognized contribution of these efforts during this year, DHS has decided and is in fact currently in process of expanding the scope of activities supported by QA&I. The expansion will include adding dedicated Quality Assurance Coordinators to support Income Maintenance work in each of the department's eight service areas. Adding eight additional staff is of course only the beginning, developing effective supporting structures and culture of improvement will be of primary focus during the initial year of this expansion in addition to targeted improvement efforts around the established Income Maintenance performance measures.

### **QA&I Structure**

The foundation which supports the work of QA&I are those structures and resources to supporting quality improvement. The Department's QA system is comprised of the following structures and resources:

- Local QA&I Committee in each Service Area consisting of representatives of the service area, consisting of front line Social Work staff, Social Work Supervisors, Income Maintenance Supervisors, Community Liaisons, Administrators and Managers.
- QA Coordinator and Quality Assurance Management Analyst in each Service Area of the Department
- Bureau of Quality Assurance in the Division of Results Based Accountability
- DHS Quality Council that includes representatives from across the Department, including the Child Welfare Business Team Members and the eight QA Coordinators, along with representatives of the Bureau of Quality Assurance and Improvement.

Statewide QA&I review functions are performed by the Bureau of Quality. This work is based upon gathering and analyzing administrative data and other information that reflect general functioning in key outcomes and efficiency of supporting operational systems. Service area QA&I staff and committees perform reviews of service area performance and outcomes for the families who receive the Department's services.



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### QA&I Approach

The approach the QA&I system uses includes the following features:

- Review for the outcomes experienced by children and families who receive the Department's services, particularly the outcome areas of safety, permanency and child well being.
- Review for the adequacy of major systemic factors that affect the Department's capacity to deliver services that will lead to improved outcomes for children and families.
- Review of program quality based on quality standards established by Federal, State and Department policies.
- Review for the strengths of the service delivery system and the barriers to more effective performance.
- Recommend corrective actions that address barriers to improved service delivery.
- Involve customers, stakeholders, and communities as partners with the Department in evaluating the system of care.

In striving for the improving results, the QA&I system gathers and uses several types of information:

- Quantitative and factual data are used to describe activities (e.g. percentage of individual service plans completed within policy time frames), service capacity (e.g. number of approved foster homes), trends (number of child abuse/neglect reports received), etc. These data enable QA&I to address questions such as "how many?" "how often?" and "at what level?" The answers to these questions enable the QA&I system to establish baselines, track progress over time and monitor trends and variation.
- Qualitative and outcome information is used to evaluate the outcomes of services and benefits we deliver to the people we serve. This information enables QA&I to address questions such as, "how well?" "how comprehensive?" "how consistently" and "what are the needs?".
- Information obtained from clients and community stakeholder interviews is used primarily to evaluate the systemic issues that affect the Department's capacity to provide services that will lead to desirable outcomes for the people we serve.

### Goals of Quality Assurance & Improvement– the overall goals of QA&I

- To provide a permanent structure for independent, objective evaluations of the quality of services and outcomes for children and adults.
- To increase the capacity of the Department to deliver improved services through the use of QA&I evaluations.
- To improve the outcomes for children and adults served by the Department through the use of QA&I evaluations.



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- To reduce the variation of outcomes for children and families served by the Department through the use of QA&I evaluations.
- To provide the DHS staff and managers with information and supports of sufficient quantity and quality to evaluate the Department's service delivery system with the ongoing goal of continuous improvement.

The QA&I system is not a separate or stand alone effort, but rather envisioned to be an integrated part of all the work that is done. The role of QA&I is to support the organizational development of the department as a learning organization. QA&I strives to improve outcomes for those who receive services, improve efficiency and ease of delivering those services for agency staff, and reduce the variation of both outcomes and efficiency, improving the predictability of high quality services and best possible outcomes.

With the above in mind, DHS established the following QA&I Mission.

### **Mission**

The mission of the Iowa Department of Human Services Quality Assurance & Improvement (QA&I) efforts are to help ensure that DHS services are delivered in a quality, appropriate, safe, respectful, and cost-effective manner that are focused on achieving positive results for the children, adults, and families served.

*For DHS to be successful in the design, development and delivery of services, quality assurance must be a part of all that we do, with a specific focus on the individual case, front line staff and supervisory levels. Improving individual case results and supporting staff with adequate data, tools, models of practice, systems, and policies to make informed decisions will improve system-wide results.*

### **Result-Based Leadership Agendas and Planning**

To assist the Department in thinking, working and planning differently, tools and coaching supports are provided to develop Leadership Agendas, result-based strategic plans, and organizational assessments, which in turn will lead to development of performance monitoring criteria, and which may involve quality improvement strategies. QA&I is also taking a significant role in helping DHS to benefit from Kaizen, Lean and Sigma 6 as strategies to quickly identify and quickly implement improvements to



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stubborn problems that sometimes have been difficult to impact with traditional management strategies.

QA & I provides dynamic and effective facilitation and related decision-making methods and supports to collaborative endeavors such as the IM Business Partners and the Services Business Team, work groups, and/or self-directed work groups and teams. In addition, QA & I provides debriefings, and can provide draft and final documents for dissemination.

A variety of DHS QA&I staff from Central Office, Field, and from DHS Institutions attended training on the use of LEAN tools within government agencies. Kaizen events have been implemented at DHS and expansion of the type and number of events is planned for the next year. DHS is also exploring how best to support development of internal capacity to facilitate and lead these events will fuel further expansion of the LEAN concept. The QA&I staff around the state will be a natural fit to be trained in facilitation and leadership in this area. The LEAN concept will provide additional tools the QA&I staff will have at their disposal.

### Highlights of QA&I Activities by Program Area

#### **Child Welfare**

A key component of quality assurance and improvement is regular communication between QA&I staff across the state sharing ideas and learning from each other. Throughout FY07, regular QA&I meetings were held for the purpose of discussion around the focus areas determined by the Service Business Team; content of discussions included evidence-based practice information, service area-specific strategies and outcomes, what works and what doesn't. Through this sharing of information, statewide trends have been identified along with ideas for strategies to improve performance. This has provided all service areas across the state with information on which to base strategy and implementation decisions affecting practice.

In an effort to fully integrate quality assurance into the fabric of the Department, representatives of QA were added to each of the Service Business Team Task Teams during this fiscal year. This has provided additional perspectives to these groups, as well as improved communication throughout the QA team regarding projects that are being considered or are in process.

Throughout the majority of FY07, a primary focus of QA&I activities was on the completion of the remaining items on the Federal PIP. Through standardization of the case reading tool expectations and routine second level quality reviews completed by the



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QA Coordinators, each service area was able to evaluate their results and determine strategies to improve performance in the remaining PIP areas. QA&I staff were able to provide a clear focus to the field regarding areas needing improvement, current performance in relation to the target, and potential strategies for meeting the target. All outstanding items on the PIP were successfully completed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the fiscal year.

Child welfare has continued to develop skill in effective use and review and analysis of data and the use of data in decision-making. QA&I staff have been essential in operationalizing the analysis of data and strategizing to improve practice. Field staff have become familiar with and rely on many monthly reports to inform them of current performance and to help focus practice improvement efforts. As the routine use of data continues to grow, the QA Coordinator's role in analysis of the data becomes even more important. The QA&I staff have provided leadership and support in understanding what the data tell us and how this can translate into practice improvements.

This appetite for data has also carried over to the CFSR case reading tool. This fiscal year has been one of refinement of the review tool – specifically working toward consistency with the Federal expectations and in application of the standards across the state. QA&I staff have implemented a random sampling process in order to capture a more representative idea of performance as we prepare for the Federal CFSR on-site review, tentatively expected in the Spring of 2009. QA&I staff have also continued to complete routine second-level reviews of case readings to provide continual support, clarification, and training as needs are identified. All areas of the Department have become more familiar with the expectations of the Federal on-site review through the use of the case reading tool; Supervisors have integrated the review into routine clinical supervision as specific findings are discussed with the assigned worker. Through this process the Federal requirements have become engrained in daily activities.

Over the last fiscal year, the use of satisfaction surveys has gained momentum to capture the “voice of the client”. RBA has been involved in the development of surveys for Recruitment & Retention, Family Team Meetings; Safety Plan and Family Safety, Risk, and Permanency services; general client satisfaction for IM and CW programs; and staff satisfaction. Through the use of the Teleform and SPSS software, the capacity for compiling, reporting, and analyzing results has been streamlined and enhanced.

### Survey Projects:

- Through collaboration between RBA and KidsNet, surveys for the Recruitment & Retention contract were developed for Resource Families, currently involved, and for Exiting Resource Families, and also for DHS staff. These surveys have been distributed and compiled; currently, RBA is developing reports to provide the information regarding overall satisfaction that is required in the contract, as well as information on general results that may aid in program improvement efforts. Collaboration continues on this



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project to assure the information gathered in the surveys is communicated effectively.

- Phase one of Family Team Meeting satisfaction surveys has been completed. This involved distribution of the survey to all participants in FTMs. The completed surveys were sent to RBA for compilation of results and report development for each of the service areas as well as a statewide summary. The results were extremely positive regarding overall satisfaction. Phase two of this project is just getting underway and will include revision of the survey tool to target more specific areas of interest and will be distributed again during FY 2008 to participants.
- As part of the outcome measures in provider contracts for delivering the new Safety Plan and Family Safety, Risk, and Permanency services, satisfaction surveys have been developed as one way of assessing provider performance regarding engaging and assessing the family and meeting the identified needs. RBA continues to work on sampling methodology and logistics of the distribution of these surveys to families who have received, or are receiving, these new services. The survey forms and details of distribution are due out to providers in late 2007 for use in 2008.

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### PROMISE JOBS

Quality Assurance and Improvement activities for Promoting Independence and Self-Sufficiency through Employment Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (PROMISE JOBS) has been primarily focused on working with policy staff to submit Iowa's Work Verification Plan (WVP). The final copy was submitted to Health and Human Services September, 2007 and thereafter approved.

#### PROMISE JOBS Case Reviews

Within Iowa's Work Verification Plan, the Internal Controls section was included to detail how Iowa will confirm and verify that PROMISE JOBS activities are consistently counted as described within the plan. One example of how activities will be monitored is through case reviews. A new web based case review tool, called PROMISE JOBS Case Review Tool (PJCRT), is in the developing stage and will align with state and federal guidelines.

Case reviews will be conducted monthly by PROMISE JOBS and DHS QA & I. First level reviews will be completed by PROMISE JOBS at the rate of one case, per worker per month via random sample. The outcomes will be tracked and monitored in PJCRT for accuracy. Second level reviews will be completed by QA & I staff to verify integrator reliability and uniformity of reviews. Standard definitions and training of how the cases will be reviewed will be shared with PROMISE JOBS reviewers so there is a consistent and common understanding of how activities align with countable federal



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activities. Overtime, data will be collected from the reviews to identify areas that need improvement.

### PROMISE JOBS Disability Specialists

QA & I worked with DHS policy staff and PROMISE JOBS to determine standard measures and outcomes for the eight PROMISE JOBS Disability Specialists. This is a new effort to work closely with those who are defined as having a disability in order to gain self-sufficiency. Monitoring of work participation for this population began February 2007. Caseloads have continued to increase slowly since February at the same rate of meeting the work rate. Once caseloads become established the measures will be reviewed with the baseline data to determine areas in need of improvement.

QA & I is assisting in the development of two survey's that will be used to collect information from clients, IVRS and PROMISE JOBS to review the collaborative efforts in helping a person with a disability overcome barriers and become successful. This is still in the development stage and a completion date for sending the survey is mid January.

### FaDSS

The FaDSS program provides in-home case management to families who are at risk of long-term dependency on the Family Investment Program (FIP). FaDSS offers FIP families with significant or multiple barriers supportive services designed to help them reach economic self-sufficiency.

Until state fiscal year 2007, the Department of Human Services contracted with the Department of Human Rights (DHR), Division of Community Action Agencies (DCAA) to administer the FaDSS grants program. In July 2007, DHR became solely **responsible** for the administration of the FaDSS program. The Department of Human Services continues to report on results for FIP families receiving FaDSS services on the DHS website.

### Focus Areas

DHS and PROMISE JOBS decided to focus on the three highest populated service delivery regions (SDR) that serve participants and review best practices. (Cedar Rapids, Davenport and Des Moines) A conference call took place on October 19, 2007. Representatives from all three areas, DHS policy staff and PROMISE JOBS administrators, discussed what's working well to meet work participation. Work participation data was shared on the three areas. It was discovered there was an abundance (above 60% ) of participants in all three areas that only had to meet 20 hours of WPR and of those, more than 70% of the participants had zero hours. This raised many questions at the conference call as to why so many had zero hours.

One SDR mentioned that this could be because a majority of that population has a Limited Benefit Plan (LBP) and is still included in the work rate after a three month time



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limited exclusion. HHS requires states to include this population in the work rate. QA & I will assist in gathering data about the number of participants within this population that have LBP's to see if that is why more than 70% have zero hours. Additional conference calls will be scheduled to share additional information.

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### Food Assistance

The QA&I model has become an established part of the Payment Accuracy Management Team (PAMT), which represents all service areas. This year, QA&I staff continued to provide data for both active and negative Quality Control (QC) Error rates, claims establishment, QC timeliness of application processing and participation. Staff also provided ongoing information and clarification regarding when the data becomes final, and what is used to calculate the data for USDA. QA&I staff were also asked to analyze QC errors, monitor trends and research ways to improve accuracy and identify lessons learned from other states.

QA&I staff identified new trends emerging in both the negative and active data. These trends were brought to the attention of PAMT. Those identified trends included an increase in wages and salaries errors, improper denials for excess income, and cancellations prior to sending the required locate letter. QA&I staff specifically followed up on the wages and salaries error trend by providing service areas with detailed summaries of their specific errors in this element as well as in shelter deductions. Based on available error data, QA&I staff provided guidance to PAMT regarding focused case reviews on cases where benefits issued were \$100 or more.

In addition, QA&I staff were asked to participate in the review of all QC error cases where the error was \$75 or more. Any information learned in that review process can then be shared during PAMT. QA&I also identified an issue with inconsistent application of the "past 30 days income" policy at recertification. Policy staff subsequently drafted revised manual to clarify the policy. QA&I staff gathered data regarding claims and worked with service areas in setting goals for claims establishment. Data regarding progress is discussed each month at PAMT.

QA&I staff coordinated the completion of the state Corrective Action Plan (CAP) this year. A new standardized format was used which helped areas to better address the federally required elements. FNS commended Iowa in their 2007 SAOR final report regarding the team approach used in developing the CAP, monitoring the implementation of CAP initiatives at PAMT, and the extensive communication about error data during PAMT.

QA&I staff conducted Food Assistance Management Evaluation reviews as required by federal regulations to monitor the priority areas set by USDA. QA&I staff completed reviews in six counties for this federal fiscal year. Case reviews were conducted on about



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forty-five cases in each review county. Grassroots contacts were made with organizations in each review county. An in-person meeting was conducted with each review county staff and service area management staff to learn about their processes. QA&I brought information from these reviews back to PAMT. They shared both best practices and any identified error trends found during these reviews.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) conducted a State Agency Operations Review (SAOR) and on-site visit in February 2007. QA&I staff were an integral part of the preparation for and organization of this site visit. The final report cited QA&I, Management Evaluation preparation for and management of ME reviews as “a best practice”. ME staff were recognized in the report for their provision of a supportive, team approach to ME reviews, rather than oversight of county office operations.

DHS implemented a revised case reading tool for IM program areas. QA&I staff participated in the development of the tool. In plan year 2008, QA&I will be providing suggestions for how to use a second level QA process to assure supervisors are scoring consistently and to assist with identification of strengths, analysis of trends, and identification of opportunities for improvement.

QA&I staff participated in the development of an online Food Assistance application that was implemented in May 2007. Customers have provided very positive feedback about this new application process. Participation in the Food Assistance Program continues to increase in Iowa and we have met the Director’s goal of 64% for the year.

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### Summary

Quality Assurance & Improvement activities have made positive contributions in several areas, even though the processes are still relatively new and will themselves become more efficient and effective with time and practice experience in QA&I. Clarity of expectations (Defining Quality) remains the lynch pin of all QA&I activities. Only after clarifying expectations can systems, processes and results be assessed for alignment and measurement of performance and results. With clarity of focus and consistent “standard” definition of performance measures we can truly understanding performance, develop effective strategic improvement plans and focusing on improving client outcomes.

Over the next year, QA&I will continue to be built into all the work of DHS staff, meaning that QA&I is not a sporadic look back performed by a few individuals, but rather builds and supports a new way of doing the business of DHS, and which requires a behavior change. QA&I requires learning to think and work differently, always thinking about what we’re trying to accomplish, evaluating how we’re doing, and we will continue to focus on improvement strategies which involve ongoing coaching, mentoring and supervision.

#### Web Links:

QA&I Web Site:	<a href="http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/qai/index.html">http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/qai/index.html</a>
Child Welfare Digital Dashboard	<a href="https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/digitaldashboard/">https://dhssecure.dhs.state.ia.us/digitaldashboard/</a>
PROMISE JOBS Web Site	<a href="http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/FaDSS.html">http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhs2005/dhs_homepage/reports_pubs/results_based/FaDSS.html</a>