



Minnesota Region 10 Quality Assurance Project

Funded by the Minnesota State Legislature

Value
Of
Individual
Choices and
Experiences

Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the stakeholder group, are they elected or how does a person get involved?

The Region 10 Stakeholders are a group of people who volunteer their time. They meet on a quarterly basis and work to improve the support system for persons with developmental disabilities. Stakeholders are people who receive support services, family members, conservators, advocates, interested citizens, support providers, county representatives and state representatives. There is NO election process. Anyone who wants to attend the Stakeholder meetings is welcome to attend. The Stakeholders are also currently looking at inequities among different services provided to persons with disabilities and are working with others to address this. If you would like more information on the Stakeholder Meetings, you can contact Arc SE Minnesota at 1-888-732-8520.

2. What is QA?

The Quality Assurance Project for persons with developmental disabilities is:

- *A way to assess the quality of life (are people having good experiences and are people happy).*
- *A way to assess and monitor the quality of support (are support providers giving people the kind of support they need based on what is important to each individual).*
- *An alternative licensing system that makes licensing recommendations to the State of Minnesota.*

3. What does QA do?

The QA Project:

- *Promotes and encourages quality improvement in the support services to persons with developmental disabilities.*
- *Encourages and challenges the whole system of supports to look at individual choices and needs and provide supports based on each individual's choices and needs.*
- *Uses VOICE (Value Of Individual Choices and Experiences) a person-driven process developed by the Stakeholders to assess the person's overall experiences and to assess provider contributions. Trained review team members (people from Region 10 Minnesota: persons receiving support, family members, advocates, providers, and case managers) interview persons receiving support services and*

talk to family, friends, support providers and case managers. Findings are given to reflect the person's overall experiences in his or her life and to reflect how the support providers are doing at supporting the person based on his or her choices and needs.

- *Also see response from question 11.*

4. Why is QA important to me?

- *If you are a person receiving support services, you might be selected to have a VOICE interview. Having a VOICE interview is a way by which you and the people that support you (your quality circle) can review what is important to you and if the support provided to you is what you want and need in your life. You are given an opportunity to get your voice heard. Through interviews the review team is able to identify what is going good for you and what you might want changed based on what is important to you.*
- *Based on findings from your VOICE review, Action Plans may need to be developed. You and your quality circle will work together to identify the action you and/or you and your family want to better support you reflecting your choices and needs.*
- *You can request a review to be done. If you are a person receiving support services through a participating county, (Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Olmsted and Winona) you can call the QA Manager and request a review be done.*
- *If you are a family member, advocate, conservator, support provider or a case manager, a VOICE review is a good way to assess if the quality circle is supporting the person as the person wishes. It is a way to get your voice heard as to what is working well and what needs to be improved in order to better support the person.*

5. Who is the QA Commission responsible to?

The Region 10 Quality Assurance Commission is responsible to the Minnesota State Legislature and the Region 10 Stakeholders –including- persons receiving support services, family members, conservators, advocates, support providers, county and state representatives.

6. How can the QA project do licensing?

Through the Minnesota Legislature, the QA Commission has been authorized to develop and implement an alternative licensing system. Using VOICE, the Region 10 QA Standards, and the protective standards, the participating counties have an agreement with the state to carry out licensing functions. The counties that are participating have hired a Quality Assurance Manager and an Assistant QA Manager to coordinate the reviews and to staff a county review council. The county Quality Assurance Review Council (QARC) is made up of Stakeholders from Region 10 Minnesota. The QARC makes licensing recommendations to the county and the county makes a recommendation to the State of Minnesota.

7. How are people selected for a review?

There are currently 5 out of 11 counties in Region 10 Minnesota that are participating in the Quality Assurance Project. If you are a person receiving case management services from one of these counties and/or receive support services through a licensed support provider, your name could be selected for a review. The QA Manager randomly selects names of people receiving support services.

8. How many people are selected for a review?

The Minnesota State Legislation mandates that a minimum of 3 people or 5% of persons being supported through a licensed program be interviewed.

9. How often do the paper reviews take place?

A “paper review” is a review of the protective standards and the Region 10 Quality Assurance Standards. A paper review is completed when a new program is licensed, 12 months after an initial license is issued and then at least once every 24 months after that.

10. How many counties are involved? How does a county get to participate? How does that work?

As of July 1, 2001 there are five out of eleven counties in Region 10 Minnesota participating in the Region 10 Quality Assurance Project, which includes the alternative licensing system.

Each year, counties in Region 10 are invited to participate. If a county chooses to participate, the County Director notifies the QA Commission. A county or group of counties that chooses to participate, are responsible for hiring a county QA Manager and coordinating a county Quality Assurance Review Council (QARC). The counties are given grant money from the QA Commission to support its participation.

Persons receiving support services, family members, support providers and county staff can encourage county participation. The county board makes the final decision for participation in the Region 10 QA Project.

A group of counties can choose to pool their grant money and hire staff to carry out the licensing responsibilities with the QARC.

11. How does the QA Project keep the level of volunteerism going?

The QA Project was developed by the Region 10 Stakeholders. There is a commitment by the Stakeholders to improve the level of support to persons. The VOICE review process is a “person-driven” process, meaning it is based on what the person wants and needs. People believe in this process and in the Region 10 System that has been developed. In order for the Quality Assurance and alternative licensing system to work, Region 10 Stakeholders have made a commitment to give of their time. Persons receiving support, family members, advocates, providers and county staff have given of their time to go through training to become a trained quality assurance team member. As people are involved in the review process, it is a learning experience for all. Support providers and

counties give in-kind contributions of staff's time because this process can make a difference in a person's life, it encourages communication and coordination, and it is a good learning experience for the staff that get involved. Persons receiving support, family members, advocates and other community members feel this process gives people a louder voice and is making a difference. Stipends are given to people who are not paid through an agency for their time to complete a VOICE review.

12. How is the Region 10 QA system different from the traditional system?

- 1. In a traditional licensing format, people and families receiving support are not always participants in the process; the focus is on minimum standards and external requirements. Through the Region 10 Quality Assurance Project, licensing of support providers is based on findings from individual VOICE reviews. Individuals and families receiving support are given a voice and are key players in the process; indeed, they drive the process. The Quality Assurance Project enhances the quality of life for people and encourages continuous improvement in the support system.*
- 2. Traditional systems do not include quality evaluation of county case management services. This alternative approach evaluates all elements of the support system, including improvement recommendations to county, state and federal agencies.*

Through this comprehensive approach, the Region 10 Quality Assurance System combines three types of quality review processes, which are traditionally separated:

- quality assurance to evaluate whether individuals are receiving appropriate supports and services;*
- quality improvement to assist specific providers, groups of providers, and the system as a whole to help individuals achieve better life outcomes; and*
- licensing of programs that use public funds to support individuals with developmental disabilities.*

Combining these efforts reduces redundancy in regulations and shifts the system into a process of continuous feedback and improvement. The process encourages providers to develop new and more effective means of support while assuring that basic safety and welfare are protected. It also provides a comprehensive and current overview on how well the system is working.

*For more information contact:
Cindy Ostrowski, Project Director
(507) 932-0292*