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Chapter 2 – Planning and Implementation Essentials

Planning for a new call center and/or website or to enhance an existing call center or website can be informal or formal, but in all cases, planning should progress from strategically planning the vision and mission of the center with broad goals and objectives, to identification of who will be involved and what they will do. The planning should include deciding how the center will be implemented, and developing an operation plan tied to a specific budget. Sizing and sustaining the center for current and future needs within current and projected sources of support should be considered in all phases of the planning process, and should include a formal program evaluation, quality improvement efforts, and changes in practice that occur over time based upon data-driven evaluations.

Project Leadership

One organization should assume overall leadership of the planning process and for the development or enhancement of the Center. This does not take away from the importance of having a collaborative process with partner organizations, but it does provide a focal point for leadership of the project. The lead organization may have several staff members responsible for the various aspects of the project, but there should be one leader who is responsible for coordinating the diverse parts – technology, partnership development, outreach, staffing, resource development, etc.

Involve existing partner organizations in setting up One-Call/One-Click Centers

Collaboration and Partnerships

A collaborative process will result in a Center that is supported by partner organizations that can bring additional expertise and resources to the center functions. Talking with existing partner organizations is a good place to start the discussions. Partner organizations can help with analyzing the service needs in the area to be served as well as identifying any gaps in service. Also, partner organizations may have existing relationships with other potential partner organizations that the group may want to invite to be part of the collaboration.

BASICS – Planning Steps

1. *Determine lead organization*
2. *Identify partners*
3. *Determine audience Center will serve and what the Center will do*
4. *Assess needs and gaps in service*
5. *Collaborate in deciding what each partner will do*
6. *Communicate regularly*
7. *Draft a plan for how the Center will be implemented*
8. *Draft an operational plan with budget*
9. *Include Quality Assurance*

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The critical first step in the planning process is having a shared vision and mission for the project. Written vision and mission statements should be developed in a collaborative way with all of the partner organizations participating to ensure that each organization is committed to the vision and mission that is established. (See sample vision and mission statements in the Appendix.)

If the Center is an enhancement to an existing Center or part of a larger project, developing shared mission and vision statements may be more challenging but not impossible. One approach may be to incorporate the vision and mission for the enhanced center into the goals and objectives for the larger project or to amend existing statements to encompass the enhanced center. The main priority should be to ensure that all partner organizations are committed to the vision and mission for the center, whether there are separate statements or they are incorporated into existing statements. Defining the scope of the center will be easier if the plans clearly describe where the center wants to concentrate its efforts and resources. Setting broad goals and objectives should be included in the planning process.

*BASICS –
Implementation
Planning*

1. *Goals and
   Objectives*
2. *Implementation
   costs*
3. *Resources
   Required –
   Facilities,
   Hardware,
   Software and Staff*
4. *Major Tasks and
   Timeline*
5. *Training*
6. *Quality Assurance*
7. *Piloting and*

Partner organizations will be more likely to stay involved in the Center if they have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. For example, each partner may commit to outreach activities, some may commit to providing educational resources, and if it is an enhanced center, one of the partners may provide the physical space and the expertise of existing staff.

Communications between partner organizations is important, and the process for communicating should be established at the outset during the planning stage. There are different methods and processes to establish and maintain the relationship and communications with partners, including holding scheduled meetings. Entering into a formal agreement, such as a Letter of Commitment, a contract, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) can be used to clearly specify partner and lead agency roles and responsibilities and processes for communication. (See sample MOA in Appendix.)

Implementation Planning

An implementation plan will guide the processes to set up the center, and whether it is a new center or enhancement to (or subcontract with) an existing center affects the complexity of implementation planning. An existing center will likely have the basic technology in place, but technology will be integral to the implementation of a new, complex center. If the new center involves a simple phone system, the integration of the technology will be less of an issue, and the implementation planning may be more informal.

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If the center involves linking different scheduling software packages used by partners, the integration of the technology will be an important part of implementation planning.

Also, if the center will have multiple agent stations (meaning what, call takers at dispersed locations?), the role of technology and the related software application(s) will play a prominent role in implementation planning and testing. There are a number of call center software packages and ride scheduling software packages available(including some open source applications) for consideration. Similarly, how the resource information will be maintained and accessed by call center staff should be part of the implementation plan. Training in these areas should be part of the implementation planning.

Ensure center can serve diverse audiences with different abilities

Implementation may be accomplished in phases, depending upon the scope and budget of center activities. The scope of the center will determine the sizing of a call center – how many stations and staff will be required to handle the anticipated volume of calls. Regardless of whether the center is simple or complex, security, privacy and HIPPA compliance issues must be addressed in implementation planning. Similarly, in keeping with the focus on a person-centered approach, quality assurance procedures should include evaluating the user experience as well as testing the functionality of the center technology and staff performance. (See Standards and Protocol Development Chapter 3, for information on developing the standards and protocols that should be included in the center's implementation process.)

BASICS – Quality Management
1. *Quality goals for staff and customer experience*
2. *Performance measures for staff monitored on on-going basis*
3. *Customer goals evaluated based upon the customer's experience*
4. *Feedback from performance measures should result in on-going staff training and review of processes*

Operation Plan

An operation plan is a road map on how the center will be operated, and it can be informal or formal. The operation plan may be part of the implementation plan, if the center being developed is a simple center, and the center can be implemented and become operational in one coordinated step.

Operation plans are generally short-term, tied to a specific budget period and linked to the strategic plan. The plan should have clear, specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-based objectives. Plans should specify the actions, resources and time period required to achieve those objectives, and how progress will be measured, including quality standards, and projected outcomes.

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Quality Management

The chapters on Standards and Protocols, Quality Assurance, Staff Management, and Resource Management provide specific information on developing these functions for One-Call/One-Click Centers and should be addressed where appropriate in the implementation and operational plans. Quality management should be included throughout all phases of the planning process – in setting up the goals and objectives, in establishing the monitoring tools, and in determining how performance will be measured, and evaluated.

Monthly staff meetings to review general results of routine performance measurements provide a good opportunity for staff training. and development

Quality/Performance Goals should be tied to the quality standards that are established for the center and should address both the quality of service delivered by staff and the center and the quality of service received by the customer. For example, a quality/performance goal for staff could be tied directly to the standards set in the protocols for how calls will be handled. The quality goal for customers could be that the customer's experience is positive and the customer is satisfied with the response and the manner in which the information is provided.

Continuity of Operations

Planning should include what will happen to continue operations in the event of a disaster or a loss of system functionality. For example, if inclement weather creates a situation where staff cannot get into the office safely – what will happen? Will the center have a message that it is closed? Are there arrangements for certain staff to receive calls at home, etc? Is there a process to move to a back-up server or center if the center's server is down? Similarly, if the computer or telephone system experiences unplanned down-time, what is the process that will be followed? There may be a simple telephone message or website message that addresses these issues. These situations may be handled in accordance with existing policy in place for the leader organization, or it may need to be coordinated with multiple partners. The important point is to address how continuity of operations will be maintained in the planning phase of the project.