



Application for 2008 Outstanding County Program Awards

County (if multi-county entry, list all): Forsyth

Submitted by: Joe Raymond Title: Director

Address: 741 N. Highland Ave, Winston-Salem, NC 27101

Phone: (336) 703-3401 E-mail: raymonjh@forsyth.cc

The Association encourages electronic submissions. E-mail the application and project/program description to Todd McGee at todd.mcgee@ncacc.org. You can also fax your entry to (919) 733-1065 (attn. Todd McGee), or mail it to: NCACC, 215 N. Dawson St., Raleigh, NC 27603. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, March 6, 2009**.

Projects/programs must have been implemented between Jan. 1, 2007, and Dec. 31, 2008. For additional information and category criteria, visit www.ncacc.org/awards/ocpa/about.html.

Project title: Training and Mentoring Program for Family & Children's Medicaid Income Maintenance Staff

Category (you may check more than one):

General Government Human Services Public Information/Participation

Address each of the following questions in a typed program/project summary in a separate Word document attached to this application form. Limit your responses to two pages. Use single-spaced lines and 12-point, Times New Roman font. Supporting materials may be submitted, but due to time constraints, judges may not review the materials.

1. What are the purpose, history, timeline and budget of the program/project? Will the county realize any projected cost savings? (For public information/participation programs, please try to estimate participation levels).
2. What makes the program/project unique? How does it differ from similar projects in your county or in other counties?
3. How well did the program use available resources, given the limitations on such resources?
4. Can this project be duplicated in other counties? If another county wanted to do a similar project, what advice would you give them to minimize obstacles and problems?
5. How did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, jurisdictions, nonprofits, businesses, etc.? How well did this collaboration work and is it on-going?

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Training and Mentoring Program for Family & Children's Medicaid Income Maintenance Staff

Purpose, History and Budget

Development of the training and mentoring program for Income Maintenance caseworkers in the Family and Children's (F&C) Medicaid program area began as a strategy to address the high turnover rate within the department. Exit interviews with departing staff informed management that staff felt overwhelmed with the volume of work and suggested that better preparedness (training) for the position could have helped them manage the job better. Development of this program began in March 2007 and implementation of the full program in March 2008.

Five primary objectives were identified as potential indicators of success of the program: 1) to better prepare new caseworkers for assuming responsibility for their caseloads, 2) to establish consistency in delivery and application of policies and procedures, 3) to increase worker productivity and efficiency, 4) to improve monitoring (quality assurance) results and 5) to foster improved communication and teamwork among staff.

There was no "special budget" for development and implementation of this program as developers sought to work within the resources already available to the agency. Dollars were spent for travel to other counties during the research and development phase. Additional funds were utilized to purchase training materials and an LCD projector and remote. The county has realized cost savings related to man hours spent on training and development activities for new staff resulting from the recurring vacancies. Of the 26 participants in this program since March 2008, 23 have remained employed with the organization, for a successful retention rate of 87%.

Uniqueness of Program

This program is unique in that it addresses the needs of new caseworkers from an individual rather than group perspective. The program has two major components – a three-week formal classroom training period and a six – eight week individualized mentoring period during which the trainee is paired with a lead caseworker for one-on-one support. During the classroom instruction, assessments are completed to determine the trainee's progress. Many hands-on activities for adult learners are included to reinforce learning, such as role plays, budgeting exercises and case reviews. For any area in which the trainee does not score well (80% or higher), remedial training is provided. During the mentoring period, weekly conferences are held with the trainee, the mentor, the trainee's supervisor and the mentor's supervisor (who serves as the meeting facilitator). The purpose of the mentoring conference is to discuss progress made, determine strategies to overcome any challenges identified, plan next steps and determine when termination of the mentoring phase is appropriate based on the trainee's progress. These meetings are documented and become part of the supervisor's employee record for the trainee.

This program differs from similar efforts within the organization and other counties because no other program (that we are familiar with) structures their approach to training in this manner.

During the research and development phase of this project, the developers visited several surrounding counties, none of which incorporated the elements of this program in the same way. In most instances, supervisors or a single lead worker was responsible for training.

Resource Utilization

The primary resource that was critical to the success of this program is that of having eight lead caseworkers available to support the classroom instruction and mentoring elements of the program. Most other counties have not been able to fully implement mentoring opportunities because they do not have many lead workers to assist in this regard. The F&C Medicaid program has a specialized unit of lead workers (8) and one lead worker supervisor.

Project Duplication

It is possible to duplicate this program in other counties, on a smaller scale if necessary, depending upon the amount of turnover in their casework positions and the number of staff available to assist with training and mentoring activities. In October 2008, the program developers facilitated a workshop regarding implementation of this program at the annual Social Services Institute. During the presentation, the developers discussed the development and implementation process that other counties can replicate in development of their own program (see attachment). In addition, several counties (8) have requested copies of the materials referenced during the presentation to help guide their efforts.

Recommendations offered to other counties to minimize or overcome obstacles include: 1) be creative when determining what resources are available and how those resources can be most efficiently and effectively utilized, 2) communicate frequently with the staff that will be involved in or affected by the program and ask for their input and 3) obtain feedback from trainees to determine what enhancements need to be made and 4) evaluate effectiveness of the program on an ongoing basis and share results with program staff.

Collaboration

As stated previously, the developers visited several counties to inquire about their training and/or mentoring activities and the function of their lead caseworkers. Site visits were made to Burke, Iredell, Durham, Guilford, Alamance and McDowell counties. Information was obtained from Catawba County via telephone call. Aside from the initial visits, no collaboration activities have occurred. The developers have shared information regarding the program with staff in other counties as they have made requests.

An Innovative Approach to Income Maintenance Caseworker Training

A Framework for Program Design

PHASE ONE: <i>Assessment</i>	Identify strengths & weaknesses of current program Identify opportunities for growth & obstacles to success <i>What do you want to accomplish?</i>
PHASE TWO: <i>Analysis</i>	Identify and prioritize major goals & objectives needed to enhance training program Gather information & respond accordingly <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you need to know?• How will you obtain the information that you need?• How will you utilize what you learn?• Where are the gaps in your knowledge? Identify available and needed resources
PHASE THREE: <i>Strategy design</i>	<i>How to you envision your training & mentoring program?</i> Determine which current or prior strategies employed that you want to continue to use Identify new opportunities and methods for gathering information needed to address the major goals & objectives
PHASE FOUR: <i>Action planning</i>	Identify specific activities needed to implement your strategy based on information obtained in Phases One & Two Delineate responsibilities for each activity/strategy & time frames for completion Identify accountability measures
PHASE FIVE: <i>Monitor and update the plan</i>	Determine which goals & strategies are effective <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obtain feedback from program participants• What changes can be implemented as a result?• Evaluate any changes in staff's productivity & efficiency Identify new goals, objectives and/or strategies needed to further improve training & mentoring program