

HOMEBUILDERS® Quality Enhancement System

“No Division of Quality Assurance can produce quality services. Quality services are produced by quality management.” (R.J. Wetzel, 1990).

Introduction

The Homebuilders quality enhancement system, known as QUEST, is designed to assure quality through the development and continual improvement of the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain model fidelity and service outcomes. QUEST activities focus on providing training and creating an internal management system of on-going evaluation and feedback as part of normal program operation. QUEST offers a process for assessing the successful performance of Homebuilders programs, and a methodology for continuous quality improvement. It accomplishes this using a three-pronged approach:

- Delineation of Homebuilders standards;
- Measurement of and feedback regarding fidelity of service implementation;
- Development of quality enhancement plans, including training and consultation, which upgrade program capacities at all levels, with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of service recipients.

The Homebuilders standards define the components of successful program implementation, reflecting the program philosophy, values, and beliefs. The standards focus on program structure and service intervention components. The QUEST process examines the way in which the service agency and its staff support the standards.

Assumptions behind QUEST include:

- Learning is a never-ending process;
- Feedback is important across and between all levels in an organization;
- All aspects of service delivery can and should be measured;
- It is useful to view problems as skill or knowledge deficits;
- Problems are most often organizational rather than individual in nature;
- Those doing evaluations should receive feedback as well as give it.

History

The development of QUEST began in 1989, with funding from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, as Homebuilders programs were being disseminated across the country. It has evolved over the years as a set of Homebuilders standards, fidelity measures, and a continuous process for assessing and enhancing program quality. QUEST is an experience-based, rather than theory-based system, with standards derived from field observations, staff interviews, client and referent feedback, and input from internal and external advisory groups. In 2006-07 a major updating of the standards and fidelity measures was done, to better reflect the key clinical aspects of the model.

QUEST as a Developmental Process

With new programs, QUEST activities include a series of workshop trainings for staff, and on-going evaluation and feedback to the agency anchored to the performance of therapists, supervisor, program manager, and administrative staff. Initially, a Homebuilders consultant collects and interprets program implementation data, and delivers feedback to the supervisor, program manager, and agency administrators. The ultimate goal of QUEST is to train the supervisor to become the program's own "consultant", overseeing the service implementation, reviewing on-going program evaluation data, and providing the necessary feedback to staff. Similarly, the program manager would be trained to analyze performance data and provide feedback to the supervisor and administrative staff. Feedback would flow across and between all levels in the organization. A primary focus of the QUEST consultant is to teach program staff how to monitor and manage program implementation.

Homebuilders Philosophy of Supervision

QUEST views the supervisor as the key component of on-going quality management. In the Homebuilders model, supervisors are considered the primary source of feedback and education for therapists regarding their implementation of the model. Supervisors are expected to teach through individual and team consultation, by accompanying therapists on home visits, and by giving feedback on clinical documentation.

QUEST Training and Consultation

The QUEST process reflects an educational model of site development. The training and consultation activities are designed to hone the skills of the supervisor, and through her/him, those of the therapists, while ensuring staff are given the management and administrative support needed to operate effectively. The QUEST process could be viewed as scaffolding that supports the growth of the program. The process begins with intensive training and consultation. As the supervisor and staff become more skillful in implementing the Homebuilders model, the intensity of training and consultation is reduced; the scaffolding is gradually removed with only maintenance checks remaining.

QUEST Activities to Support Homebuilders Site Development Include:

- Infrastructure development in the funding agency;
- Assistance in hiring program staff;
- Workshop training for program managers, supervisors, and therapists;
- Clinical consultation with therapists and supervisors;
- Technical assistance for program managers, supervisors, and support staff;
- Review of client records;
- Review of agency and individual performance on fidelity measures;
- Review of program outcomes.