



NONPROFIT & PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT IN THE HUMAN SERVICES

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The HR Information System in EMQ FamiliesFirst: A Teaching Case on Managing Human Resources in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations

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Introduction

Effective human resource (HR) systems help contribute to the sustainability of nonprofit agencies by providing information about staff that can inform decision-making at all levels of an organization. Comprehensive HR systems enable agencies to keep track of employee data and HR policies over time, support the record-keeping of professional development processes and enable employee use of HR information (Kavanagh & Thite, 2009). HR systems can also support the processes that connect employee performance goals with the organization's mission and thereby help to assess and refine progress towards those major organizational goals (Norton and Kaplan, 1996). For example, individual performance data can be linked to job-level performance expectations, which, in-turn, can be linked to program- and organizational-level performance goals. The aggregation of ongoing employee performance assessments, as well as growth in knowledge and skills, can provide trend information that can be used to improve overall organizational performance.

High performing organizations invest heavily in training (Appelbaum & Batt, 1994 in Kalleberg and Moody, 1994). Along with electronic reviews of staff performance, policies and systems can make training opportunities accessible to all staff, thereby placing professional development at the heart of an organization rather than simply focused on employee deficiencies. HR information systems provide program managers with up-to-date information on employee training and development in terms of cost of trainings, scheduling and attendance, staff learning needs related to ongoing performance assessment (Kavanagh & Thite, 2009). An HR system can also include information on employee compensation to ensure that compensation is fair and appropriate for individual staff performance and experience and competitive with similar positions in other agencies as they relate to employee qualifications, experience, and years of service in the agency.

EMQ Families First

EMQ FamiliesFirst, the result of the 2009 merger between EMQ and FamiliesFirst, is California's largest and most comprehensive nonprofit social service agency for children in crisis and their families. The agency annually serves 18,000 children and their family members by providing a range of services, including foster care and adoption services; intensive in-home services; outpatient mental health services; prevention and early intervention; residential treatment; school-based services; and transitional housing. There are 1,400 members of staff, including physicians, nurses, psychologists, social workers, counselors, therapists, and management and support personnel.

As the merger was being completed, EMQ FamiliesFirst developed and implemented an online performance management and staff evaluation system. The system was designed by Halogen Software, and is called "Halogen" within the agency (www.halogensoftware.com). The Halogen system is interactive and acts as a centralized location for information that both supervisors and staff members can use to develop performance goals and monitor progress towards those goals. Staff member are able to see their performance goals, record their own progress and achievements, and see and comment on the performance assessments made by their managers.

The Halogen system replaced old systems located in different locations and using different formats and thereby integrated the key HR functions related to succession planning, performance, development and training, and compensation. The system enables EMQ FamiliesFirst to more effectively and efficiently manage personnel, develop and manage professional development, improve the accountability of services, and track human resource information.

The system was implemented in two phases: 1) performance management and 2) development and training. Communication about the system and its implementation were handled via email and an agency-wide voice mail system. Employees were trained in group meetings and managers received supplemental training. The training schedule began with upper management, then middle management, and finally direct service staff. The training comprised classroom demonstrations, hands-on activities, and pre-recorded, computer-based video training. Staff was also provided with 'user guides' that contain step-by-step instructions accompanied by computer screen displays of the system.

The Halogen system is flexible and designed to meet most of the agency needs. In the case of any difficulty for the agency with the system, however, Halogen has an open policy of ensuring customer needs are met by taking customer suggestions and requests and considering them for ongoing system updates. Additionally, Halogen Software set up a helpline to address any emerging issues. Ongoing support is maintained via a phone hotline and a dedicated email account. The implementation of Halogen was mostly trouble-free, with only minor issues emerging from server connection problems at remote sites.

Human Resource Policy

EMQ FamiliesFirst has a full catalogue of HR policies available on the organization's intranet system (see Appendix 1). Although policies are not accessed through the Halogen system, they provide the framework for the HR system. Successfully managing human resources is as essential as managing financial and physical resources when it comes to supporting the behavioral and cultural transformations needed to implement organizational change. Jurkiewicz and Bradley (2002) report that organization's

cultural factors contained within human resource policies: 1) are more important than the economic-political environment when it comes to the productivity, ethics, values, exercise of authority, and innovation of staff and 2) can support individual employees, challenge them to grow, reward their progress and innovation, restrain inefficiencies, and include consequences for specific actions are positively correlated with employee effort.

Performance Management

The main mechanisms for performance management contained within the Halogen system are an online performance journal used to document supervision meetings and the semi-annual performance review process.

Supervision

Records of supervision and staff performance are kept within an online performance journal that functions as a narrative between a supervisor and staff member and both can contribute to it. All information related to an employee's job performance (e.g. comments related to performance successes or challenges, notes about events in an employee's work life, training sessions attended or changes to position or role) are contained within the performance journal. For example, if a supervisor discusses a performance issue with a staff member, the conversation is noted in the journal along with any decisions taken or action plans developed. If a supervisor adds a comment into the journal, the system can send an email asking the direct report to look at that entry, although supervisors also have an option to indicate whether or not the direct report can see a particular entry in the performance journal. Regularly updating task and performance related information in one location enables supervisors to have a clearer picture of what staff members are working on and how well they are doing. It also supports clearer communication between supervisors and staff by minimizing surprises related to emerging performance concerns that supervisors may have about an employee without the need to wait for the next performance review process.

The system is not intended to reduce face-to-face supervision but simply enables all parties to send, review, and respond to notes either before or after supervision meetings. This has proved to be particularly useful in the supervision of staff in remote locations where it may be difficult to schedule regular in-person meetings. When necessary, supervision can take place over the phone, and both the supervisor and the staff member can see the same information when logging onto the Halogen HR system.

Performance Reviews

Semi-annual performance reviews are based on a discussion of an employee's progress towards achieving personal learning goals. Performance reviews are conducted using a traffic light system to indicate progress towards goals. Goals from the previous period are reviewed, and supervisors can click a green button to indicate "progress", yellow to indicate "making progress," and red to indicate "stalled." The supervisor can also input how far someone is away from goal completion (e.g. if a person is only 10 percent towards goal completion in the third quarter, that worker would receive a red traffic light symbol). Once a goal is completed, the date of completion is shown and this becomes part of the employee's performance record. When a performance review has been completed, the staff member can see it online and the system shows the date that it was accessed. Staff members and supervisors can both comment on the on the review.

Supervisors have found this new HR system has cut down on the amount of time it takes to complete performance reviews as they can indicate progress towards goals with the click of a button instead of writing out behavioral statements. Goals are updated in a few minutes instead of the hour per person it had taken previously. The new system also improved the efficiency of performance reviews by compiling all of the needed information in one location. Since all supervision notes are written into a performance journal that is contained within the online system, there is no need to go back through a stack of notes or try to remember what happened in the previous period; all the information needed to complete a review is in one place online. Supervisors can also easily access all performance reviews

completed since the system came on board in 2009, as well as upload reviews from prior years into the system. This has enabled simplified record keeping, as well as creating a permanent record for staff and allowing for comparisons between performance periods. It also means that performance can be reviewed more frequently than just during semi-annual appraisals, since the time needed to complete a review has been diminished. The online performance journal that includes supervision notes also helps to ensure that staff receives regular feedback about performance throughout the year and not just during the performance review period.

Professional Development

Personal learning plans, which contain goals and activities, are informed by issues raised through supervision, assessments made during performance reviews, and progress towards defined competencies contained within job descriptions.

Goal Setting

Through supervision and performance reviews, supervisors engage in a shared process with staff that is designed to produce a personal learning plan. Learning plans are structured to enable individual staff members to continue to grow professionally in relationship to specific task performance (e.g. attaining job-role competencies) and to career progression (e.g. completing training or continuing education). Goals usually include specific activities or objectives designed to help meet the goal (e.g. attending a specific training session on the Halogen system that would be documented in personal learning plans). By placing all information related to staff performance in one location, it is easier to develop evidence-informed and comprehensive learning plans.

Goals are often related to the attainment of certain competencies that are needed to successfully fulfill individual job roles. When a new employee is hired or a position is created, the agency uses the job description to identify the competencies needed for that position. These competencies help supervisors specify the skills, knowledge, and qualifications needed to perform successfully in the role. It enables

them to know what success looks like and what individual staff members need to accomplish in order to be successful.

An example of goal setting related to job-role competency can be seen for staff working in parent education. EMQ FamiliesFirst uses the evidence-based Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) model of parenting education that requires staff members to use specified practice techniques to ensure its effective delivery. Since staff working within the parenting program need to demonstrate competency in the Triple P method, a goal for a new worker may be to complete the Triple P training program.

Job performance competencies are scored using numerical categories from one to five, where “3” indicates that the staff member is meeting expectations, below “3” indicates that expectations are not being met, and above “3” indicates the job performance exceeds expectations. Scoring below a “3” on a particular competency triggers a discussion about training, and the individual staff member then has a specified amount of time to complete the training.

Individual goals can also be related to wider agency goals. On the Halogen system, all individual competencies are linked to related agency goals, which are listed and defined on each employee’s personal page. Agency goals are updated and refined annually, and new performance goals can be added to a staff member’s pages to reflect those changes. This helps connect day-to-day actions by staff to the work of the overall organization, providing a more comprehensive picture of how individuals and their work fit in with the agency’s mission.

Some examples of how individual goals link to agency goals include:

- Agency goal: Strengthen service delivery.
Staff goal: Implement service philosophy and cultural competency guidelines, and ensure that agency services reflect highest service and cultural competence.
- Agency goal: Expand Programming by 15% and support financial stability.
Staff goal: Implement fund development plan.

- Agency goal: Institutionalize Continuous Quality Improvement Practices.
Staff goal: Documentation of client records is timely and 100 % accurate.

Compensation

The Halogen system also helps track compensation and supports decisions about salary increases. The numerical rankings that each employee receives through the performance review process can be linked to salary increases, depending on the financial condition of the organization. Senior management can create a report from the system that shows evaluation information across the agency, enabling them to make decisions about monetary incentives in the context of other budgetary decisions. If adjustments are possible, senior management can recognize employees who score in the higher ranks with a higher salary adjustment (e.g. linking an overall “5” to a five percent pay increase, with a “3” or “4” resulting in lower compensation; a “3” is the minimum level necessary to receive a salary adjustment). There is also a pool for merit pay, or retention bonuses, and managers have discretion in awarding these funds to particular staff members, although in the last few years there have been more appreciation events and fewer monetary rewards, due to funding limitations. The Halogen system easily enables supervisors to document the rationale for evaluation scores, which helps to reduce bias.

Team management

The Halogen system supports more efficient and improved accountability by enabling multiple levels of supervisors to access the pages of all staff down the organizational span of supervision. This means that managers can see the pages of their own direct reports as well as the pages of those staff members’ direct reports. Thus, the Executive Director can see down to line staff level while staff members who do not manage other people can only access their own information. Managers can also generate a report about individual staff members based on their online performance journals. They can then send an email from the Halogen system with that information to their supervisor, which has proved

helpful, particularly when there is some concern about an employee's performance or uncertainty about how to rate someone during a performance review.

These team management functions that were built into the Halogen system have improved accountability for staff performance and increased confidence in the quality of the agency's client services. Supervisors can review how their staff are doing and monitor for any emerging job performance issues. The record of performance over time has made it easier to determine if someone is struggling in a particular area. Problems are tracked and can be addressed more quickly without the need to wait for a semi-annual performance review. It is also a more streamlined process as supervisors can use the performance journal entries to flag the history of a concern by asking the staff member to review journal entries where discussions of the issue were documented.

The Halogen system also supports improved accountability as it was designed to work with the agency's electronic case management system, primary by linking the allocation of staff time to various services. For example, all timesheets are electronic and are completed within the Halogen system, and the system can generate a report that enables the agency to compare the times reported by staff on timesheets to the times entered into the case management system. This function also supports program audits by enabling information to be compared across the systems.

Improved administrative function

The Halogen system has helped EMQ FamiliesFirst improve its human resource functions, particularly by enabling greater staff access to the HR department, supporting fair and responsive compensation levels, ensuring programmatic outcomes are being met, and tracking professional development opportunities available to and utilized by staff.

The system provides staff access to human resource functions in a number of ways. For example, there is an "employee self-service" section where employees can update their personal information, such as emergency contact numbers. There is also a section for reimbursements, such as for mileage or out of

pocket expenses, including a way to look up the status of a reimbursement request and the expected dispersal date.

The Halogen system enables EMQ FamiliesFirst to track compensation information for all employees, such as their history of salary over time. The system generates reports that show compensation levels for agency staff that enables managers to compare compensation levels across the regions served by the agency or with other nonprofits. This helps the agency to determine the number of staff at regional averages for salaries as well as the number who are above or below. This feature also helps the Board members understand how the staff is performing in relation to compensation levels as well as role of compensation in comparison with other organizational expenditures.

The Halogen system also helps to ensure timely and efficient administrative functioning. For example, when employees sign into the system, their home page shows upcoming due dates (e.g. dates to complete a performance review). Agency-wide reports can also be generated from the system that show the number of employees who still need to complete their performance reviews, thereby alerting supervisors to send reminders to their staff. In addition, the system acts as a monitoring tool that supports administrative functions (e.g. enabling the training department to see which region or programs are accessing training and thereby compare results with agency outcome measures to see which departments are doing well and which need to improve staff capabilities). Trainers can also access the scores for completed trainings as a way of assessing training effectiveness (e.g. if participant scores are consistently low it may lead the department to revamp the training programs).

Individual staff members can also take a greater role in accessing professional development opportunities via an online training catalogue (e.g. using personal development plans when reviewing the learning catalogue to find/enroll in the most relevant training program). Supervisors can access training logs of staff members and assist them in promoting the transfer of learning back to the job situation. All completed training experiences are logged into the system, providing a profile of all training programs completed by each staff member. This information can be used to support grant proposals and contract

monitoring by enabling the agency to demonstrate to funders the extent to which training programs have been completed by staff. A sample illustration of the training catalogue can be found in Appendix 2 and an example of a staff training log can be found in Appendix 3.

While the implementation of the Halogen system has been a challenging learning process for both supervisors and staff, there is a general staff consensus that it has improved the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency's human resource and performance management functions. The online performance journal and performance reviews help to support transparent and timely communication between supervisor and staff. In addition, the personal learning plans and the training calendar have streamlined the professional development processes within the agency. The breadth and depth of the monitoring features of the HR information system have clearly improved the access to and flexibility of human resource functions.

References

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Appendix 1: EMQ FamiliesFirst Human Resource Policies

Client Issues

- Abuse Reporting - Child
- Abuse Reporting - Elder and Dependent Adult
- Aftercare Services
- Clients Rights
- Clinical Assessments
- Confidentiality Guidelines for Public Family Meetings
- Confidentiality of Health Information
- Consumer Grievance and Resolution Process
- Language Interpreter Services
- Medication Logs
- Discharge Planning
- Duty to Warn
- Electronic Communication with Clients
- Psychiatric Coverage

Compliance processes

- Billing Practices
- Cancellation Policy
- Co-Signature Requirements for Medi-cal
- Compliance Reporting
- Correcting Amending a Medical Record
- Medical Necessity for Medi-Cal
- Documentation of Clinical Record

Finance

- Corporate Credit Cards
- Cost Allocation Policy
- Mileage Reimbursement
- Petty Cash
- Purchasing Policy
- Travel Expense Reimbursement

Human Resource Policies

- Agency Property and Tools
- Alcohol and Drug Policy
- Attendance
- Bereavement Leave
- Bilingual Proficiency
- Clinical License Compensation

- Clinical Supervision for Trainees-Registered Interns
- Compensation Philosophy
- Conflict of Interest
- Credentialing of Paraprof for MHRS
- Definitions and Status
- Domestic Partners
- Dress Code
- Dual Relationship Management
- Employee Handbook
- Employee Incentive and Recognition
- Employee Problem Resolution
- Employee STAR Referral
- Employment Documentation
- Ensuring Acceptable Conduct
- Equal Opportunity Employment
- Family Care-Medical Leave
- Harassment
- Health and Safety
- Holidays
- Hours of Work and Payroll Practices
- Jury Duty
- Media Interviews
- Military Family Leave
- Military Training and Active Duty Leave
- Orientation of New Staff
- Overtime
- Performance Appraisal
- Personnel Records
- Qualification Verification of Licensed Clinical Prof
- Reasonable Accommodations for Disabilities
- References
- Requisition and Selection
- Sexual Harassment Prevention and Reporting
- Sick Leave
- Smoke Free Environment
- Solicitation, Distribution and use of Bulletin Boards
- Suspension and Termination of Clinical Privileges
- Telephone Procedures
- Temporary Workforce
- Termination of Employment
- Transfer and or Promotion

- Tuition Reimbursement
- Unpaid Personal Time
- Vacation
- Verification of Right to Work
- Volunteers
- Workplace Violence

Organizational processes

- Advanced Directive
- Anti-Kickback Policy
- Assessment and Outcome Evaluation Requirements
- Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Compliance
- Compliance Ed and Training policy
- Creating Revising EMQ Clinical Treatment Forms
- Cultural, Ethnic, Religious Diversity Policy
- Disaster Emergency Response
- Emergency Response to Potential Poisoning
- Emergency Treatment of Resident Staff and or Visitor Injuries
- EMQ LOGO Usage
- Funding Assessment for New Grants
- Hepatitis B Immunization for Employees
- Incident Report
- Infection Control Program
- Infections, Tracking of
- Information Retention, Storage and Disposal
- Intervention Reporting
- Non-Client Children and Visitors on Premises
- Non-Discrimination and Cultural Competence-Service Delivery
- Notice of Action
- Outcomes and Evaluations - Report Requests
- Program Evaluation & Logic Model
- Proof of Guardianship
- Responding to Investigations
- Subpoenas, Summons, and Court Orders
-

- User Accounts
- Use of Personal Electronic Devices
- System Backup and Disaster Recovery
- Technology Acquisition
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Computer Moves and Disposal
- Data Completion, Accuracy and Validity
- Electronic Mail Policy
- Electronic Signature
- Error Reporting and System Maintenance
- Information Technology Contingency Plan
- Internal Network Audit
- Internet Access Policy
- Physical Safeguards
- Security Planning
- Stolen and Lost Equipment

PHI Policies

- Business Associate Agreement
- Consumer Right to Confidential Communications
- De-identification
- Designated Record Set
- Faxing
- Individual Right for an Accounting of Disclosures
- Individual Right to Access
- Individual Right to Agree or Object
- Individual Right to Request Amendment
- Individual Right to Restrict Use and Disclosure
- Minimum Necessary
- Notice of Information Privacy Practices
- Privacy Compliance Standards
- TPO Use and Disclosure
- Use and Disclosure No Permission Required
- Use and Disclosure with Authorization

IT Policies

PPO Policies

- Driving on EMQ Business
- Facility Access
- Facility Vendors

- ID of Employees and Visitors
- Injury and Illness Prevention Program
- Workplace Accidents, Illness Investigation Program

Appendix 2: EMQ FamiliesFirst Training Catalogue (Sample Page)

Title	Code	Competency	Type
Assessment for Planning and Tracking Outcomes - Part 3	2556	Attention to detail, Documents clearly and accurately, Encouraging customer focus, Individual Family and Group Therapy, Psychological assessment, Service Excellence	Online
Assessment for Planning and Tracking Outcomes - Part 2	2555	Attention to detail, Documents clearly and accurately, Encouraging customer focus, Individual Family and Group Therapy, Psychological assessment, Service Excellence	Online
Assessment for Planning and Tracking Outcomes - Part 1	2554	Attention to detail, Documents clearly and accurately, Encouraging customer focus, Individual Family and Group Therapy, Psychological assessment, Service Excellence	Online
Assessment and Medical Necessity	2816	Documents clearly and accurately	Online
ASQ/SE	2780		Classroom
Art Therapy Basics	2768		Classroom
Art Therapy 101	2901		Classroom
Applying Principles & Practices of Applied Behavior Analysis	2696		Classroom
Applying Functions of Behavior	2662		Classroom
Applied Mindfulness	2869		Classroom
Anxiety Disorders: Diagnosis and Treatment - PO	35-EL	Individual Family and Group Therapy, Medication management, Psychological assessment	Online
Anti-Human Trafficking	2733	Cross-Cultural Sensitivity	Classroom
Analyzing Performance and Corrective Action Plans	2335	Action Oriented / Empowered, Change management, Clinical Leadership, Collaborates with other team members, Conflict resolution, Contributes to team performance, Documents clearly and accurately, Ethics and business conduct, Leadership, Leads team performance, Project management, Supervision and accountability, Workforce development	

Appendix 3: EMQ FamiliesFirst Staff Training Log (Sample Page)

2011			
Learning Activities	Completed Date	Score	Pass/Fail
Plus Delta Change Agent Workshop Day 1	02/07/2011		
Plus Delta Change Agent Workshop Day 2	02/07/2011		
Total			
2010			
Learning Activities	Completed Date	Score	Pass/Fail
Advanced Training - EMQ FamiliesFirst Principles: Collaborative & Integrative	06/15/2010		Pass
Advanced Training - EMQ FamiliesFirst Principles: Team Based	05/22/2010		Pass
Anti-Human Trafficking	05/27/2010		
CANS for EMQ FamiliesFirst	11/10/2010	86.00%	Pass
CANS for EMQ FamiliesFirst: Training for Trainers	09/28/2010		Pass
CANS for EMQFF Managers - Training for Trainers	09/28/2010		Pass
Compliance and You	02/28/2010	95.00%	Pass
Culture and Family Violence	07/08/2010		
EMQ FamiliesFirst Principles: Culturally Competent	02/26/2010		
HR Actions: Basics	04/23/2010		
Laugh Yourself Safe	07/30/2010		
Leadership Academy	08/10/2010		
Managing Hours Worked: Manager's Session	10/25/2010		
The Art of Inquiry: Culturally Competent Communication	05/27/2010		
Trauma of Domestic Violence	07/08/2010		
Total			
2009			
Learning Activities	Completed Date	Score	Pass/Fail
Halogen - Performance and Development Planning	10/06/2009		
Listening & Noticing Intent & Impact: Culturally Competent Communication	12/18/2009		
Management 101 Day 1	06/01/2009		
Smart Goals and Performance Management Process	04/08/2009		
Total			
2008			
Learning Activities	Completed Date	Score	Pass/Fail
Cultural Diversity 7070	02/26/2008		
IT/Compliance/HIPAA	11/21/2008		
Sexual Harassment for Supervisors 7070	02/26/2008		