

# Writing a *Continuing Improvement Plan*

By Lauren Boyle

One of the key aspects of CCQA involves undertaking an ongoing cycle of self-study and planning for improvement. Developing a *Continuing Improvement Plan* is essential to this process as it allows services to document and evaluate their plans and to share them with stakeholders such as families and children.

When participating in self-study services are required develop and include a *Continuing Improvement Plan* which addresses their improvement strategies for each Quality Area. All services are expected to engage in a continuing process of self-study and planning for improvement during the period between *Self-study Report* submissions.

## What is a *Continuing Improvement Plan*?

The *Continuing Improvement Plan* is developed after a service has identified the quality of its current practices. Once current practice has been evaluated, the service must determine what it needs to change or improve to either meet the standards required for Accreditation or to improve aspects of the care provided for children.

A *Continuing Improvement Plan* should include some basic elements such as how and when the plans for improvement will be implemented or reviewed, and who will participate in or be responsible for the specific tasks. Even when a service is operating at a high quality level, there are always aspects of practice that can be extended upon to ensure that the level of quality is maintained.

## What is the purpose of the *Continuing Improvement Plan*?

The main purpose of the *Continuing Improvement Plan* is to assist services to document, implement and evaluate their quality improvement strategies on an ongoing basis. It is most useful when it is designed as a practical resource which supports improvement processes.

When developing a *Continuing Improvement Plan*, it is recommended that services consider any goals they may have already developed or will be working towards as part of their general

## What should be included in a *Continuing Improvement Plan*?

The following suggestions are examples of the types of activities that may be identified in a service's *Continuing Improvement Plan*:

- Investigating ideas, issues or topics that the service wants to learn more about. For example, innovative approaches to planning for children, professional development strategies or new management techniques.
- Developing or extending strategies for seeking feedback from children, families, child care professionals, management and the wider community about aspects of the service's operations.
- Developing or extending strategies to ensure that children, families, staff and management have opportunities to be involved in making decisions.
- Accessing or updating information from recognised authorities or current research. For example, information on health and safety, child protection, behaviour guidance, equity and inclusion.
- Implementing procedures for evaluating current practice and how it affects children, families, child care professionals and management.
- Developing strategies to monitor the effectiveness of the service's policies and procedures.
- Supporting or extending development opportunities for child care professionals.
- Making changes to specific procedures, routines or activities to improve their effectiveness.
- Developing strategies for managing issues or events that are likely to occur or have been planned for the future. For example, where a major renovation or building project is planned or where a key staff member is scheduled to be on extended leave.

service delivery. These goals might include things such as planned maintenance or building work, long term program goals for groups of children, or plans developed in response to stakeholder feedback, for example, the implementation of regular, formal meetings for families.

### How can service stakeholders be involved in writing the *Continuing Improvement Plan*?

It is important that all stakeholders have genuine opportunities to be involved in developing and implementing the service's *Continuing Improvement Plan*. The prospect of change can cause some people to feel anxious. It can be helpful for the people most affected by the change to have opportunities to contribute to deciding how the change will occur and in implementing the tasks that will make the change a reality.

### How should the *Continuing Improvement Plan* look?

While there is no set *Continuing Improvement Plan* design, it is useful to include certain elements to make it easy to implement and evaluate, and to ensure its clarity for service stakeholders. Useful elements to have in a *Continuing Improvement Plan* include:

- an outline or description of the issue, area or practice that is to be improved;
- a description of the strategies that will be used to accomplish the improvement;
- an explanation of who will be involved and/or be responsible for implementing the strategy; and
- a timeframe within which the plan is to be achieved and/or reviewed.

### **A *Continuing Improvement Plan* may look like this:**

**Goal:** Review the service's healthy eating policy

**Strategies:**

- The service coordinator will attend training on child nutrition
- Information from the training will be shared with all child care professionals
- the healthy eating policy will be updated as needed
- All families will be invited to provide feedback on the policy review through the parent notice board.

**Timeframe:**

To be completed by 31 August 2008

**Person(s) Responsible:** The Coordinator

While services must develop a *Continuing Improvement Plan* which covers each Quality Area, these do not have to include every aspect of each Quality Area. Each service needs to consult with its stakeholders to identify which areas it wishes to prioritise for improvement. However, as a first priority, all services must plan to improve, to at least a Satisfactory standard, any aspect of its practices that has been identified as being Unsatisfactory.

Services may either handwrite or type their *Continuing Improvement Plan*, ensuring that these do not exceed the allocated space in the *Self-study Report*. Alternatively, services can include a single *Continuing Improvement Plan* covering all of the Quality Areas, which should not exceed four A4 pages ■

### References and further reading.

- National Childcare Accreditation Council. (2006). *Family Day Care Quality Assurance Quality Practices Guide Supplementary Resource*. (1st ed.) NSW: Author.
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