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From Grumbling to Getting Along

Creating and Using Teams to Enhance Retention

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Josette was an excellent employee. She had worked for the organization for a couple of years. Her supervisor appreciated her enthusiasm, creativity, and compassion for her work. She really had a natural talent for working with people who had challenges, and she was focused on connecting with families as well. Abruptly, Josette decided to quit working for the organization. Her supervisor was shocked. Not until a few months later did the supervisor realize that Josette had quit because she had been having conflicts with another staff person at the organization. The supervisor felt bad — had she known about the issues perhaps she could have retained Josette as an employee and the people who Josette supported would not have had to be disappointed by her absence.

This chapter provides information and concrete strategies to assist supervisors faced with the kind situation just described. Having a group of people who get along and do not grumble is critical to successful teamwork in community human services. This chapter describes the importance of teams in increasing retention of direct support professionals (DSPs). Basic information about what teams are, how they form, and how to enhance team functioning and team building is included in this chapter. Specific strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of existing teams are also provided.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

Competent front-line supervisors (FLSs) are the leaders of the groups of DSPs they supervise. These supervisors are responsible for coordinating and maintaining effective teams. Often when DSPs leave organizations, they do so because of difficulty with their co-workers. The competencies listed here are connected to the need for FLSs to be effective team developers and facilitators.

Primary Skills

1 FLSs facilitate teamwork and positive interaction and attitudes among DSPs.

FLSs plan, facilitate, evaluate, and follow up on team meetings.

FLSs use knowledge about the status of team development to further team growth.

FLSs help team members build a common definition of *team* to use as a framework for their work.

FLSs increase team awareness about the qualities that make teams effective and successful.

FLSs build an effective team through being organized, identifying and dealing with conflict, setting and monitoring goals, and evaluating and celebrating results.

Related Skills

1 FLSs effectively communicate with DSPs by listening to their concerns, supporting and encouraging their ideas and work, thanking them for their contributions, and providing positive feedback regarding performance.

FLSs provide counseling and support to DSPs when conflicts arise.

FLSs provide formal communication to DSPs by using log books or memos and by facilitating effective meetings and purposeful interactions.

FLSs encourage staff to maintain appropriate boundaries regarding personal and professional issues.

3 FLSs coordinate and facilitate annual, quarterly, and as-needed planning meetings for supported individuals or assist DSPs in this process.

FLSs communicate necessary information and maintain positive working relationships with staff from other organizations that provide supports to individuals served.

6 FLSs coordinate, facilitate, and teach and support DSPs to lead meetings.

1 FLSs recognize the need for and plan celebrations with DSPs.

4 FLSs attend and actively participate in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work group meetings.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Finding, keeping, and training DSPs are significant problems for community human services organizations (ANCOR, 2001b; Rosen, 1996; Test, Solow, & Flowers, 1999; see also Chapter 1). Often people think that poor pay is the main reason DSPs leave

their positions. Although pay makes a difference in how long DSPs stay in their positions, it is not the only factor that makes a difference. In fact, DSPs often report that they leave their positions because of conflicts with their supervisor or co-workers (Larson, Lakin, & Bruininks, 1998; Stremmel, 1991). Many DSPs have little contact with co-workers except through staff communication logs, during shift overlaps, and at staff meetings and training sessions. Infrequent contact with co-workers can make it difficult to develop relationships, form cohesive teams and work groups, and resolve conflicts. Problems that arise may not come to the attention of the supervisor. Often, by the time that the supervisor realizes there is a problem, the conflict has already driven an employee out the door. The extent to which a supervisor can facilitate positive interactions between and among DSPs can significantly affect how long DSPs stay in their positions. Facilitating the development of teams and using positive problem-solving skills are critical tasks for supervisors as they try to retain good employees.

Within human services and other disciplines, the use of teams and work groups has become commonplace. Almost all human services organizations have groups of DSPs who work together as a team to support the individuals who receive services and to carry out the daily responsibilities of the job. Human services organizations also have teams or support networks that plan for the supports an individual might receive from the organization and that develop procedures to address challenging behavior. Most organizations also have work teams that address such issues as the allocation of space, employee benefits, grievances, and human rights issues. Thus, supervisors and DSPs have many opportunities to participate in team processes.

RESEARCH SUPPORTS FOR SOLUTIONS

In community human services there has been a notable shift in how supports are delivered. One significant change is that people receive supports in their own homes rather in congregate care settings (Prouty, Smith, & Lakin, 2004). As a result DSPs work in dispersed settings without direct guidance from a supervisor. Some organizations are thus relying more heavily on the work of groups of DSPs or teams. In some cases these teams are guided and directed by a team leader or supervisor and in other situations they are self-directed work teams with a rotating team leader.

There are several documented reasons that teams are used in human services organizations, including 1) to increase productivity, 2) to improve quality, 3) to maximize the potential and skills of all employees, 4) to improve morale and job satisfaction, and 5) to reduce the need for high levels of management (Nelson & Economy, 2003; Sauer et al., 1997; Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994). Perhaps one of the most important reasons to promote teamwork, however, is that high-quality, well-functioning teams could reduce staff turnover by lessening conflict among co-workers, supervisors, and other team members and by improving communication and team functioning.

In considering the use of self-directed teams, it is assumed that a group of people working together who are focused, organized, and trained can be more productive and creative than an individual working alone (Sauer et al., 1997). Synergy—the ideas, attitudes and creativity of the individuals in the team working together—often results in greater productivity and develops a broader and deeper level of knowledge that the

team can draw on to support the individuals receiving supports (Sauer et. al., 1997). One commonly held belief about moving to work teams is that initially it costs more money and takes more time to get work done (Nelson & Economy, 2003). Although this is initially likely, the benefits often far outweigh the downside.

In community human services organizations there are numerous ways in which DSPs and others participate in teams. They often work with their co-workers to provide targeted services and supports to the people who receive their services. They may also be a part of ongoing committees or task forces (e.g., quality assurance teams, human rights committees). DSPs are also likely involved in individual support teams (networks) for people who receive services. These support teams often include the individual and his or her family and/or friends; include other staff from the organization and other organizations; and, quite often, include professionals in targeted professions (e.g., nursing; psychology; speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy). Because DSPs are exposed to and asked to be a part of many types of teams, it is critical that they develop the skills and attitudes necessary for them to be effective team players (Taylor, Bradley, & Warren, 1996).

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

Although supervisors and managers are asked to facilitate team processes and DSPs are asked to be members of various types of teams, these groups rarely receive training on how to develop, facilitate, and evaluate team processes. The following section focuses on the skills and strategies needed by supervisors to effectively manage teams.

Develop Effective Teams

Develop Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes About Teams and Team Building

Team building and understanding team processes do not come naturally to most team members and leaders. Every team member has a different personality and brings unique experiences, talents, and attributes to the team. Without specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSAs) about why teams are important and about how to facilitate and manage teams, supervisors may experience struggles that are typical to team development yet may have little understanding of team dynamics and how to deal with conflicts. It is critical for supervisors to understand what a team is, the common stages of team development, characteristics of effective and ineffective teams, team-building strategies, and ways to evaluate team effectiveness.

Explore Definitions and Types of Teams

Each team looks and acts differently. Consider the numerous types of teams that exist in any organization or community. The actual word *team* comes from the Indo-European root *deuk*, which means *to pull.* Thus, the concept of pulling together as a group is inherent in the original meaning of the word. Today, a team is any group of people who need each other to accomplish a specific desired outcome (Senge et al., 1994).

As mentioned previously, in community human services organizations, there are many types of teams. Certainly the most common is a person-centered support team.

This type of team focuses on helping the person for whom the plan is being done. The team is composed of people—such as family members, friends, and neighbors of the individual receiving supports; DSPs; an FLS; a program manager; and others—who care about and are committed to the growth and development of the individual who needs support. Together team members work to define the person's dreams, set and prioritize goals, identify potential barriers, search for resources, and commit to supports that help the person achieve his or her dreams and goals. In a person-centered support team, the group members with an organization affiliation also have other responsibilities that relate to organization expectations and individual professional development.

In some community human services settings, there are also interdisciplinary planning teams. These teams are focused on the professionals involved rather than on the individuals supported. These teams meet regularly to develop an individual program plan that is designed to help a person meet goals that will enable him or her to live a more meaningful life in the community. This type of team functions more frequently in ICF/MR (intermediate care facilities for individuals with mental retardation) residential settings or in larger congregate vocational programs. Interdisciplinary planning teams usually include a service coordinator (case manager), a program manager, specialists (e.g., nurse, behavioral support specialist, speech-language pathologist), and the person who receives supports and his or her family and friends; these teams also often include an FLS and sometimes include DSPs. Interdisciplinary team meetings can be confusing to DSPs if their role and purpose in the meeting and their relationship to other team members have not been clearly defined.

Supervisors and managers need to invite DSPs to person-centered and interdisciplinary team meetings, assist them in understanding their role or purpose on these teams, and promote positive team interactions. DSPs often have a unique understanding and knowledge of each person they support and therefore have much to contribute. DSPs on person-centered and interdisciplinary teams often serve as advocates and information specialists.

Another type of team of which a DSP or supervisor might be a member is a cross-functional or project-related team. This type of team brings together people from various roles and positions within the organization for a shared purpose or project. Within community human services settings, cross-functional teams include human rights task forces, quality assurance committees, employee recognition committees, and celebration planning groups. DSPs are often poorly represented on cross-functional teams: It is common for a committee of 10–15 people to include no DSPs or only one. In this situation, DSPs often feel intimidated by the team process and perceive that they have no influence on team decisions and outcomes.

Supervisors and managers need to invite DSPs to become members of teams and train them about the stages of team development, their role within the team, and the overall purpose or function of the team. Then all team members will feel empowered to contribute in the team environment and help the individuals to whom they provide support to become empowered and lead more satisfying and better lives.

Understand Stages of Team Development

Understanding the dynamics of team development processes is an important step in learning how to build and support teams. Table 10.1 provides one model of the stages

of team development. Although all teams develop at their own rate and in their own manner, most teams go through similar developmental processes.

At the initial phase, *getting together*, the team is coming together for the first few times and is establishing its purpose, goals, tasks, and rules or norms (Scholtes, 1988; Tuckman, 1965). This is often a time when group members size up one another to see where and how they will fit into the group. Team members may be asking themselves the following questions during this initial stage of development:

- Am I going to be accepted as a part of this group?
- Am I in control of certain things related to this group, or am I controlled by other members?
- Will I have a chance to make valuable contributions to this group by using my talents and skills?
- What is my specific role on the team?
- Who are the other team members, what are their roles, and what do they expect of me on this team?

During the second phase of group development, *doing together*, conflict may occur (Scholtes, 1988; Tuckman, 1965). People are learning about the other members of the group and are forming initial opinions about whether they like them and whether they value their opinions and beliefs. Groups at this stage have defined their tasks and roles and are beginning to tackle the achievement of their goals. When interpersonal and style differences are expressed, conflict can occur. Every team member has a preferred way to approach the specific tasks of the team. When these work styles are not compatible, teams can experience difficulty. For example, the leader of team redesigning orientation to be more accepting of recent immigrants to the United States may use two different strategies in approaching this task: 1) to meet with or interview employees who are immigrants to ask how they might prefer the orientation to be modified or 2) to modify the orientation based on the knowledge of the team members and then have employees who are immigrants provide feedback. The first is more open and participatory; the second, more closed and reaction oriented. When team members approach tasks from differing perspectives and work styles, they need guidance from the facilitator and the involvement of all team members to determine a process that works best for the team to reach the desired outcome. Without this team leadership and team member participation, conflict is likely to arise as the task is implemented because not all members have buy-in to the process. Conflict will probably be more intense if it is not acknowledged and dealt with in the early stages of team development.

During the *becoming together* stage of group development, team members begin to feel like they are actually a group (Scholtes, 1988; Tuckman, 1965). The processes the team will use to achieve its tasks have been agreed on and are implemented. Any conflict that arises for the team members now will likely be identified and acknowledged. The team operates effectively and productively now. At this stage members often define their team with a name.

In the *performing together* stage, team members work on their tasks and seek support from other team members when they need it. When a conflict or barrier is identified, the team is able to resolve it quickly and effectively. Members of the group have developed positive relationships and begin to have trust and respect for each member's

Table 10.1. Stages of team development

Team stage	What occurs
Getting together	Introductions are made. Group members learn about one another, establish goals, develop rules, identify desired outcomes, and define processes. Members consider one another's personalities and characteristics. Some members may test each other's boundaries during this stage.
Doing together	Members begin work on tasks, differences in processes related to task are identified, different opinions are voiced, interpersonal feelings about members develop, and conflict occurs.
Becoming together	Conflicts are worked out, processes are agreed on, effective communication systems are developed, and the group begins to feel like a team.
Performing together	Group members develop positive relationships and respect, problem solving occurs quickly, and tasks are completed.
Rejoicing together	Goals are met, tasks are completed, and the group terminates its meetings.

Source: Tuckman, 1965.

contributions. A supported living program at this stage of group development, for example, operates smoothly, has staff members who complete their assigned tasks well, and openly acknowledges and effectively resolves conflict, and the desired outcomes of the people who receive supports from this program are reached.

The final stage of team development is the *rejoicing together* stage. At this stage the group's tasks are all completed, and group members thus stop working together as a group (Scholtes, 1988; Tuckman, 1965). It is a time to celebrate the team's accomplishments. Many groups in which DSPs and supervisors participate, however, do not have a defined end point. More commonly, team membership turns over frequently or the group tasks change. These ongoing changes significantly affect team processes. Since these conditions are often known ahead of time, it is important for the team to discuss this issue in the early stages of team development. In addition, the team could discuss how celebrations for certain milestones will occur since the group will not have a defined end point.

As the team develops, team members need to consider the fluid nature of the team and discuss how changing membership will be addressed in the team process. Without this discussion, many negative side effects could occur. New team members may not be accepted, the team may not move beyond the initial stages, and some team members may leave the team because they are frustrated with slow progress in achieving desired outcomes. Any of these negative effects of changing membership can lead to an ineffective team. With strong leadership and a proactive approach to this concern, a team can still operate effectively in this environment, avoiding premature termination of team members from the team or organization and other frustrating team outcomes.

If the team's task or function changes, the team may need to reassess its previously identified team rules and process. This can lead to a revisitation of previous stages or the end of the team process. Ideally, the team members enter the *rejoicing together* stage when they have completed their identified tasks and have not found other issues to address as a team. During the *rejoicing together* stage, they focus on summarizing team results and celebrating their accomplishments.

Be Aware of the Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Teams

Some teams do very well together, and others struggle through all stages of team development. Effective teams are able to generate output, achieve their desired outcomes, and complete identified tasks. Teams that develop supports for people with disabilities often have goals related to the lives of the people they support. For example, a common goal for a person-centered support team might be to assist a person in reducing challenging behavior over 1 month. An effective team would set and reach realistic goals that make this happen or would identify areas that may need to change in the person's environment for this person to reach the desired outcome.

Effective teams communicate well with one another and openly deal with conflict when it arises (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 1993; Ness, 1994; Ness & Krawetz, 1999). For example, members of a person-centered support team who have differences of opinion about how to support a person in reducing challenging behavior can communicate openly and respectfully when discussing these differences and can come to a quick and effective solution. For example, at one meeting of a person-centered support team, a DSP suggested that offering choices during activity time might reduce one individual's challenging behavior. The program manager challenged this idea, but the DSP listed several specific incidents of challenging behavior when choices were not offered. The program manager apologized to the DSP and agreed that offering more choices during activity time might be a useful strategy.

Effective teams usually have a defined structure (e.g., roles, norms, process) and often reach decisions through consensus (Sauer et al., 1997). Table 10.2 summarizes the qualities of effective teams. Team meetings are organized, and members serve specific roles. Meetings generally have stated purposes and an agenda. Common roles for team members during meetings include facilitator, recordkeeper, and timekeeper. Members have completed assigned tasks before each meeting and participate in the meeting.

Even though many teams are effective, it is important for supervisors and managers to be able to recognize the signs of a troubled team. If team members are not aware of the problems a team is having, it is impossible to identify strategies to improve the team process. Every team is different, based on membership, purpose, and

Table 10.2. Qualities of effective teams

Effective teams . . .
Set clearly defined mission, vision, and goals, and expect these to be achieved
Develop a means to determine how well the team is meeting the mission, vision, and goals
Identify roles and discuss the expectations and activities of those roles
Solve problems together
Openly address conflict
Provide support to all team members, and show appreciation for each member's contributions
Provide ongoing feedback to one another on how the team is doing; evaluate the team's process and outcomes
Celebrate the team's successes and accomplishments

processes, but there are some common problems that could be at the root of a team's lack of productivity (see Table 10.3).

Once a supervisor or manager recognizes that a team is operating ineffectively, he or she can help the team to correct the problems. Some of the strategies that might be used include

- Facilitating a dialogue about team perceptions
- Reaching consensus about what is wrong and ways to deal with the issues
- Providing training
- Suggesting the use of periodic feedback and performance checks
- Supporting and recognizing the team's progress

Implementing these strategies in a planned and consistent manner will help the team on its journey to becoming effective or regaining effectiveness.

Establish Group Norms and Rules

Group norms and rules are standards that team members develop through brainstorming or other processes so that the team runs more smoothly and effectively and so that team members have guidelines to follow in meetings. For example, some group norms address how team members will treat each other (e.g., with respect, using active listening), what is expected for meeting deadlines or communicating with each other between meetings, attendance expectations and how absences will be handled, and what processes are to be used for resolving issues or conflict (e.g., creative problem solving).

Supervisors and managers have many opportunities to form new teams and to work with new groups of people. Considering the previously mentioned elements of effective teamwork each time a new group of employees comes together is important. Because teams in community human services often encounter frequently changing mem-

Table 10.3. Common signs of troubled teams

There is a lack of communication. People are afraid to communicate and are guarded.
Team members use impersonal communication. Members do not talk in meetings but follow up with negative e-mails or memos.
Members often criticize other members and say hurtful and disrespectful things.
There is no discussion or disagreement during meetings. All members go along with everything and never share differences of opinion.
Meetings are poorly organized, and everyone dreads coming to them.
Competition among team members is obvious and disruptive.
The team's mission and goals are unclear to team members.
Everyone shows up to the team meetings, but nothing gets done.
Decisions are always made by the facilitator or the leader, not by all team members.
Members are confused or disagree about their roles.
Team members lack diversity (e.g., age, gender, race, religion, level of productivity, type of work).
The team does not talk about itself as a team and rarely evaluates its effectiveness.

Sources: Scholtes, 1988; Varney, 1989.

bership, having processes in place to welcome, support, and inform new members about the team norms is essential for the health of the team. Also, when new members are added to the team, it may be useful to review the team's purpose, goals, and roles; the responsibilities of team members; and the informal ways the team operates. This will assist new members in understanding the team norms as quickly as possible. Table 10.4 lists several questions that teams can answer as they establish team norms and roles.

Establish Team-Building Strategies

Several team-building strategies can assist in the development of effective teams, including 1) planning and conducting effective meetings, 2) using ice breakers and other tools to help team members get to know one another better, 3) using good communication skills, and 4) celebrating team accomplishments.

Plan and Conduct Effective Meetings

Many times people complain about having to go to meetings that are ineffective or not worth their time. Assigning a team facilitator is important to ensure the effectiveness of the team's meetings and outcomes (Nelson & Economy, 2003; Sauer et al., 1997). All team members, but in particular the team facilitator, should be skilled in planning, conducting, and evaluating effective meetings. A team facilitator keeps the team on track with discussion and tasks, informs the group about the time allotted for each agenda item, and takes the pulse of the team's process and progress. Often the role of the facilitator is rotated, enabling other people to share in the responsibility and to better understand and observe which facilitation strategies work for the team.

Another important element of effective team meetings is ensuring that each meeting has an agenda. Agendas should have designated items for discussion and decision making, and these items should be allotted a specific amount of time. Team members often appreciate being informed of the purpose of the meeting and the agenda items before the meeting. Often team members want to add items to the agenda; the facilitator can solicit this information by asking team members to review and add any needed items to the agenda before the meeting.

Table 10.4. Establishing team norms and rules: Questions to ask

What are our mission, vision, and goals?
When, where, and how frequently should we meet?
Who will serve in what roles on the team? Will they serve in these roles throughout the duration of the team, or will we rotate these roles?
When a new member comes into the group, how will we welcome this person and assign him or her roles?
When a person leaves the group, how will we handle this transition?
How will we reach decisions within this team? By consensus? Majority rules? Leader decides?
When conflict arises within our team, how will we handle it?
How will we keep members informed about our activities after we meet and between meetings?
Are we a time-limited group or an ongoing group?
How will we support one another?
How will we celebrate our accomplishments?

In addition, it is important for the team to determine if each meeting should be recorded in some way. Sometimes, team members decide to keep their own notes; other times official meeting minutes are kept and disseminated. Whatever process is used, it is important for teams to have a way to keep track of critical decisions and individual or group assignments.

Have Team Members Get to Know One Another

As mentioned previously, team members all come to the group with unique expectations, experiences, skills, attributes, strengths, and work styles. It is important for teams to take the time to identify the unique qualities in all team members and explore who could use specific strengths in specific situations. For teams that have been working together for a while, revisiting these differences may be useful. Some teams find it helpful to use simple team-building activities at the beginning of any meeting. This can be as simple as answering questions such as the following:

- "What animal do you most identify with and why?"
- "What is one thing that others in the group likely do not know about you?"
- "What is your favorite color?"

Some teams may choose to use a more formal assessment tool such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & Briggs, n.d.). Whatever method a team chooses, team members should get to know one another, understand and talk about the differences among group members, and capitalize on the strengths of team members.

Use Good Communication Skills

Team members and team facilitators need to understand and use effective communication skills. These skills may be difficult to develop but are essential to effective teamwork. All team members need to be able to listen, paraphrase, and provide constructive feedback to other team members. Conflict or ineffectiveness in teams almost always relates back to team members' inability to effectively communicate with one another. Table 10.5 provides some essential definitions and tips to assist team members in enhancing their communications skills.

Celebrate Team Accomplishments

Celebrating team accomplishments is an important aspect of team building (Nelson, & Economy, 2003; Rees, 1997). It conveys to group members that their contributions are valued and appreciated. Without celebrations and purposeful acknowledgement of the team's contributions, the work environment can sometimes feel depressing, oppressive, or unforgiving. Simple acknowledgments of team events and accomplishments, such as the arrival of new members, completion of an assigned task, or supporting a person served to achieve a desired goal, can make the difference between an exciting or a stale and stagnant work environment.

Acknowledging team members through celebrations can be simple, direct, and not very time consuming. Some celebrations ideas include 1) going out for lunch together; 2) identifying and discussing milestones at team meetings; 3) acknowledging team accomplishments together and sharing them with others (e.g., managers, administrators, organization leadership team); 4) writing a quick note for the organiza-

Table 10.5. Effective communication skills

Communication skill	Definition
Active listening	Active listening involves sensing, understanding, evaluating, and responding. Active listeners keep an open mind and hear out the person who is speaking. Active listeners make a point to understand the position of the person who is speaking. They observe verbal and nonverbal cues, and they do not interrupt a speaker. Active listeners pay attention when the speaker is talking, and they make a point to look at the person who is communicating.
Paraphrasing	Paraphrasing is saying back to the speaker what you thought he or she said using your own words. The purpose of paraphrasing is to clarify for the speaker what you heard and to allow him or her the opportunity to tell you if what you heard is what the speaker thought he or she said. This interaction helps to ensure that what was said is understood in a way that the person communicating intended. Some common ways to start paraphrasing are "What I heard you say was . . . " or "Do you mean . . . ?"
Constructive feedback	Constructive feedback is a way to tell the person who is communicating how you perceived his or her statement and what you think about it. When providing constructive feedback it is important to focus on how the communication affects you. This type of feedback should be objective, descriptive, and timely and should provide the person with useful information with which he or she can do something. When providing constructive feedback, you are trying to help the person. Constructive feedback is not about trying to hurt someone or achieving personal gain. It is designed to be respectful and to focus on the behavior or statement that has been communicated, not on the person. Some possible ways to start constructive feedback are "I wanted to give you some feedback on what I observed in the meeting," or "When you said *X,* I felt *Y.*" One suggestion is to preface feedback with an inquiry about whether or not the person wants feedback in a specific area.

From Sauer, J., O'Nell, S., Sedlezky, L., Scaletta, K., Taylor, M., & Silver, J. (1997). *An introduction to teamwork in community health and human services* (p. 44). Cambridge, MA: Human Services Research Institute; adapted by permission.

tion newsletter; or 5) simply saying, "Hooray, we did it!" No matter how accomplishments are celebrated, the team facilitator and team members should remember to always look for and recognize the team's accomplishments, big or small. The positive effect this can have on team spirit may be surprising.

Evaluate Team Effectiveness

It is important for team members to frequently evaluate the team's effectiveness as they work together to achieve desired outcomes or goals (Rees, 1997; Sauer, 1994). The team should evaluate itself by asking the following important questions:

- How effective is the team at defining its mission, vision, and goals?
- Does the team use agendas? If not, why not?
- Do team members come prepared and ready to contribute? If not, why not?
- What could make the team operate more effectively?
- Do team members think team meetings are productive? If not, why not?
- Do team members believe that the team sessions are effectively facilitated? If not, why not?
- How do team members feel about the outcomes of the team?
- How do team members feel about the process that was used to reach the outcomes?

- Does the team use effective communication strategies? If not, why not?

This evaluation process does not have to be complex or long. Sometimes the team facilitator can simply check in with team members during each meeting. The Team Performance Evaluation at the end of this chapter provides one quick and easy way to evaluate the process and the outcomes of a team.

In addition to evaluating the overall performance of the entire team (e.g., process, outcomes), it is often helpful to provide specific feedback to the team facilitator. Important elements to include in this feedback are the facilitator's ability 1) to keep the team focused and on task, 2) to involve the group in developing the agenda and make sure that it is followed, 3) to ensure that all members get to participate and that their ideas are expressed, 4) to work with the team to make a decision or reach consensus on an issue, and 5) to manage and facilitate the resolution to any conflict that arises. The Team Facilitator Evaluation at the end this chapter can be useful in evaluating the effectiveness of the team facilitator.

Manage Conflicts Among Team Members

Conflict is a natural part of any team's development. All teams experience conflict. What is important is that teams learn how to effectively manage their conflict. Table 10.6 identifies common ways in which groups or teams may respond to conflict (ineffectively or effectively). All group members need to be involved in determining how the group will handle conflict when it arises.

As mentioned previously, team members may have agreed on a conflict management approach as a part of group norms during the *getting together* stage of development. If that did occur, the group will want to use that conflict resolution process when a conflict emerges. Remember, if team members are involved in making this process decision, they will be more willing to participate in conflict resolution when it is needed.

Create and Support Self-Directed Work Teams

A self-directed work team is a type of work group that has the authority and responsibility, within certain parameters approved by organization administrators, to establish its mission, accomplish its goals, and be accountable for its outcomes. For example, a self-directed work team could be composed of DSPs who provide supports for four individuals living in a home and who require 24-hour supervision. This self-directed team does not have a supervisor but rather has a team leader who rotates periodically, and the team members work together, with the help of a manager, to complete the responsibilities usually assigned to a supervisor, including recruiting, selecting, and hiring DSPs (co-workers); establishing and monitoring work schedules; coordinating or ensuring orientation and training programs; completing peer performance evaluations; and, most important, developing, implementing, and evaluating support plans for the individuals served. Usually a manager who has responsibility to supervise several different work supervisors manages, coaches, and evaluates the work of the self-directed work team.

Self-directed work teams are uncommon within community human services. However, the In the Spotlight segment about Vinfen Corporation that appears later in this chapter provides insight into one organization's experience with using self-directed

Table 10.6. Team reactions to conflict and disagreements

Reaction type and description	Outcome
Denial or withdrawal	
The team attempts to get rid of the conflict by denying it even exists. For example, a team member may always come to meetings late and no one may mention it. If this topic is brought up, team members may say, "It's just a part of our team culture" or "We seem to get our work done."	The conflict rarely goes away when this reaction type is used. Often the conflict becomes unmanageable. Denial or withdrawal may occasionally be effective when the team is not facing a critical deadline related to the conflict. Sometimes with enough time things can get better.
Suppression or smoothing it over	
The team deals with the conflict by smoothing it over. Common phrases are "Let's be positive" and "We run a happy ship around here." Differences between team members are played down and are not openly discussed or appreciated. For example, some team members may say, "That's just the way she is" or people may comment after a meeting, "Why does he always say something contrary when an idea is shared?"	The conflict rarely goes away when this reaction type is used. Preserving a relationship between team members may sometimes be more important than dealing with a conflict that does not involve critical issues. In these situations, suppressing the conflict may be a viable way for team members to react.
Power or dominance	
The team deals with the conflict by letting a person with authority or a majority vote resolve the conflict.	This reaction type results in winners and losers and may affect the future performance of team members. This approach should rarely be used. If it is used, all team members need to openly discuss the approach and agree to its use.
Compromise or negotiation	
The team deals with the conflict by bargaining or attempting to reach a middle ground or a compromise. For example, when trying to reach a decision after a number of ideas have been heavily discussed, some team members sensing frustration might say, " Why don't we just combine ideas 1 and 2?" or "Let's just vote on each idea and use the one with the most votes."	The conflict can be resolved using this strategy, but often the resulting outcome is less effective and watered down. This strategy can result in people inflating or overstating their positions so that when a compromise is reached it is closer to their original favored position. Team members sometimes lack commitment to the compromised position. When time is limited or there are not enough resources to implement another desired solution to the conflict, compromise can be effective.
Integration and collaboration	
The team deals with the conflict by recognizing and understanding the strengths of all positions. Team members try to find a resolution that is win–win for everyone instead of trying to defend their positions and having a win–lose or a lose–lose outcome.	Team members recognize that in managing the conflict, they will likely have to modify their positions. The group process results in an outcome that every member agrees with or is comfortable with.

Source: Sauer et al., 1997.

work teams. As this industry moves toward more person-centered and -directed supports, self-directed teams may become more common because they offer solutions to many of the problems that occur during the provision of community supports.

Self-directed teams provide the infrastructure for DSPs and FLSs to identify and implement supports that meet the needs of people who have unique needs and expectations for services. Even though a manager may work closely with a self-directed work team in matters relating to meeting organizational quality outcomes, the power for shaping and enriching the quality of individual supports and services lies with the self-directed team members. This empowering process often results in more satisfying jobs for DSPs by providing greater challenge, variety, and opportunity for improved quality in the work they perform.

Members of self-directed work teams share the responsibility for achieving certain outcomes for a specific work site (e.g., residential program site, supported employment unit). Members share their talents and strengths to complete the tasks required of the overall team. Most important, these types of teams have the authority, resources, and support of management to design, implement, monitor, and control the work processes needed to complete the assigned tasks of the group (Bucholz & Roth, 1987; Torres & Spiegel, 1990). Members of these teams share responsibilities. Often they have to learn new skills to achieve all of the desired outcomes.

Self-directed teams have a number of common responsibilities including but not limited to the following (Bucholz & Roth, 1987; Sauer et al., 1997; Torres & Spiegel, 1990):

- Monitoring and reviewing overall processes and team performance
- Scheduling
- Assigning responsibilities to group members
- Problem solving
- Improving the performance and efficiency of the group
- Conducting performance reviews of all members
- Selecting new team members
- Preparing, implementing, and monitoring budgets
- Training and mentoring all team members
- Coordinating work with other teams and with the management of the organization

With self-directed work teams, the roles and responsibilities of supervisor and managers change (see Table 10.7). In traditional work situations, supervision comes from middle management outside the group. With self-directed teams, supervision comes from within the group. Top management in an organization delegates work responsibilities to the self-directed work team, many of which are typically borne by supervisors and managers in a traditional organization. In self-directed teams, supervisors become the initial team leaders for a given period (e.g., 6 months, 1 year, or longer). As other self-directed team members become more skilled, however, the leadership role often rotates.

The roles and responsibilities of program managers also change with the development of self-directed work teams. Fewer managers are usually required when an organization employs self-directed work teams. The roles of managers who are members of self-directed work teams change from directing and controlling work and team processes to leading, supporting, troubleshooting, and providing feedback and training.

Table 10.7. The role of the manager in traditional and self-directed team environments

Responsibility	Role of manager in traditional work environment	Role of manager who works with a self-directed work team
Monitoring and reviewing overall work processes	Controls and delegates to supervisors	Works with self-directed teams and their leaders, provides orientation, and helps set the direction for teams
Scheduling work shifts	Delegates to supervisors	Delegates to self-directed work teams; listens to wants and needs of team and provides ideas and support related to scheduling
Assigning work responsibilities	Delegates to supervisors	Delegates to self-directed work teams within specific parameters
Identifying and resolving problems	Works with supervisors based on information they provide about work situations	Delegates to self-directed work teams and may act as facilitator in certain situations
Improving and enhancing the quality of work	Holds supervisors responsible through periodic quality checks	Works with self-directed work teams and their leaders within the framework developed by top management
Conducting performance reviews	Delegates to supervisors	Delegates to self-directed work team, provides resources for training, expects periodic reports, recognizes team successes, and works to correct weaknesses
Selecting new employees	Delegates to supervisors	Delegates to self-directed work team, provides resources for training, expects periodic reports, recognizes team successes, and works to correct weaknesses
Managing budgets	Maintains overall control and delegates small amount of responsibility to supervisors	Works with self-directed work teams and their leaders using specific parameters established by top management
Training and mentoring	Holds supervisor responsible for most training and mentoring Provides needed resources (e.g., money, equipment, training space) to supervisors	Delegates to self-directed work teams, provides resources and support, and expects periodic reports
Coordinating work with other teams and with management	Coordinates with other managers through meetings with top management	Works with self-directed work team representatives, acts as advocate for self-directed teams with top management, and supports self-directed team representatives to meet with top leadership

Responsibility	Role of manager in traditional work environment	Role of manager who works with a self-directed work team
Communicating organization's mission, vision, and values	Works with and delegates to supervisors	Shares with self-directed work team through dialogues and training
Setting overall direction of the organization	Works with supervisor to channel this information to direct support professionals (DSPs)	Works with self-directed work team and involves team members through dialogue and training
Designing and implementing organizational change projects (e.g., expansion of services, creating a system in which the organization is hired by a self-advocate or a family member who is in charge of meeting the supported individual's needs and operating a consumer-directed support services program)	Works through chain of command by carrying out top management plans and holding supervisor responsible for ensuring that DSPs execute any new plans	Works closely with self-directed team leaders and members by soliciting input; providing training; providing resources; acting as advocate for self-directed teams with top management; and providing active, constant, and persistent involvement throughout the change process

Certain aspects of work are not fully delegated or are not delegated at all to self-directed work teams. For example, top management may permit each work team to control the budget for its program services but not salaries. Self-directed teams may have input in redesigning the organization's mission, vision, and values, but top managers usually develop the overall direction, size, and scope of the organization.

In the Spotlight: Vinfen Corporation

In February 1997, the Co-op Network, a program of the Vinfen Corporation, shifted models from a traditional supervisory structure to a self-directed team. In 1996, a DSP from Switzerland came to work at the Co-op Network in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for 1 year as part of an international exchange fellowship program. She was impressed with depth of services provided but challenged the top-down hierarchical structure and successfully convinced some organization administrators to pilot a model that empowered DSPs; thus, the first self-directed team at Vinfen emerged.

The Co-op Network provides service coordination to individuals with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities who require intermittent supports and reside in independent community apartments throughout greater Boston. Before making the transition to a self-directed team model, the Co-op Network was composed of a program manager and four DSPs. DSPs worked in isolation under the direct supervision of the program manager.

The self-directed team enhanced the quality of supports by integrating the members of the Co-op Network and by increasing DSP autonomy. In this self-directed team, members meet biweekly to discuss issues that have arisen and to talk about the individuals who receive supports from the program. Team meetings are facilitated by a DSP who is elected by members of the team to serve as team leader for 6 months. In addition to facilitating meetings, the team leader attends organization manager meetings and training

and is a liaison between the self-directed team and organization administration.

The change to the self-directed team format resulted in elimination of the program manager position and the addition of another DSP. Supervision was replaced with peer feedback as the self-directed team developed tools that are used each month to assess and observe the quality of required DSP work. The self-directed team members also share administrative responsibilities previously held by the program manager. Administrative and clinical staff members provide mentoring and support to team members based on needs identified by the team through training and roundtable discussions.

The success of this first self-directed team encouraged a similar program model in the Apartment Living Program at Vinfen. This program area made the transition from a traditional hierarchical management structure in January 1998. Vinfen recognized both self-directed teams for providing outstanding supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities, awarding the teams the Vinfen Mental Retardation Division's 1998 Outstanding Team Award. In February 1998, the Hewlett Street Apartments program of Vinfen, which serves individuals with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities who require 24-hour supervision, became a self-directed team. Currently, seven DSPs (two of whom are overnight employees) provide support to eight individuals living in a multifamily house. As with the Co-op Network staff, the DSPs at Hewlett Street share administrative responsibilities and rotate team leaders every 6 months. Challenges for this self-directed team have been different than for the other teams due to the needs associated with a 24-hour residential program. This self-directed team has quarterly retreats away from the program site to improve the quality of supports and the effectiveness of the program.

As a multiservice organization, Vinfen has met with success in its quest to implement and support self-directed teams. Vinfen started slowly and has been able to cross-pollinate the self-directed team concept throughout the organization.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Barriers to Implementing Self-Directed Work Teams

It sometimes is overwhelming to community human services managers and administrators to think about moving to self-directed teams. The most common reaction to the prospect of using self-directed teams is that turnover rates among staff are too high and that the DSPs do not have the skills needed for such significant responsibilities. Although these are valid concerns, perhaps one way to think about the possibility of developing self-directed teams is to consider some positive outcomes of using them. By becoming empowered to make a difference and to contribute value to the organization, perhaps more DSPs would be motivated to stay and develop the higher-level skills necessary to do DSP work. In addition, some organizations have realized that by investing in self-directed teams, they have been able to divert the salaries of middle managers back to DSPs, resulting in DSPs' earning higher wages and staying in their positions longer.

It is important that there be buy-in from all levels within the organization when considering the use of self-directed teams. An organizational change of this magnitude will not succeed without buy-in of all DSPs; the championing of the systems change by key managers and supervisors; and the visible, consistent, and constant support of the CEO, head administrator, or owner and the organization's board of directors. In

other words, there must be a strong commitment at all levels of the organization for the principles of empowerment, respect, support, and celebration. In addition, there must be strong alignment between this specific organizational change process and the organization's mission, core values, and vision. (See Chapter 12 for more information on organizational change.)

If the organization decides to set up self-directed teams, sufficient preparation is critical. Starting slowly and building on successes that come easily are crucial. Being ready to ride out the rough spots and understanding the organization's tolerance for the rough ride is also important. The organization can look for one program component or site that has a great group of staff and build on its success.

Barriers to Implementing Other Types of Teams

Work groups and teams in community human services organizations can face unique challenges. As mentioned previously, because of the high turnover rates of DSPs, the membership of a team can be everchanging. It is common for half of the team members to leave in a year. It is then difficult for the work group or team to fully develop because so much time is spent on orienting new members. The team will not be able to move to the *performing together* stage of team development unless it has defined how it will negotiate and handle new membership. Team members need to quickly develop processes for group norms and role clarification. Otherwise, it is impossible for a team to accomplish its goals as new members join the group.

One result of changing team membership is that the group may become closed to new members. It is not uncommon to hear from newly hired DSPs that they have been ignored or excluded from group decision-making processes, that they feel unwelcome, or that their ideas are ignored or discounted. Often this occurs because the long-term group members identify themselves as a cohesive group and have learned how to work effectively together in achieving their goals. Over time they have come to realize that each time a new person enters the group, the group processes start all over again. They are likely protecting themselves from more orientation, which takes time away from their work tasks; from conflicts arising from new members; and from the loss of their current team cohesiveness. To avoid this, work teams need to have predetermined processes for how they will handle new group membership and need to restructure team roles to support the new group members.

Also, facilitators need to be aware of these dynamics so that the work team does not become closed. For example, a facilitator might ask for an existing team member to act as a mentor for a new team member to explain the group's norms; explain informal ways of operating; share the team mission, vision, and goals; provide past meeting minutes; and describe some of the team's strengths, challenges, and accomplishments. Another way the facilitator can help the team from closing off to new team members is to use part of a meeting to evaluate how well the team is functioning, what current challenges the team is facing, and how agreed-on deadlines are being met. In this way, the new member gets some orientation and the existing team members can do some routine checkups.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, another issue that often arises for work teams within community human services is that daily job tasks change routinely even

though the organization's broad goals and outcomes (e.g., supporting people to be included in the community and live better lives) do not change. For example, a person who receives supports might move away and a new person might begin receiving supports, a supported individual's health needs might change, an individual might decide he or she wants to attend a new place of worship, and so forth. Often negotiating and monitoring these new duties becomes difficult for team members. One way to address this issue is for the team to have a process of identifying and assigning new tasks to its members. If this process is predetermined, the work team will know what to expect and the likelihood of certain team members' becoming overburdened will be reduced. Involving all team members in developing this task assignment process is helpful.

Work teams in community human services also are isolated from each other. Communication among team members other than through a staff log is difficult to arrange and infrequent. Team members need time to network; get to know one another; determine group processes; and identify goals, roles, and responsibilities. Without this time, it is difficult for members to move beyond the initial stages of group development. Providing opportunities to meet is particularly challenging because of turnover. Team facilitators should ensure regular face-to-face meetings among team members who work different hours or days of the week. Here are some ways for facilitators to reduce isolation among team members:

- Provide flexibility in scheduling team meetings to ensure that different work schedules are recognized.
- Before a scheduled team meeting, gather input from individuals who are unable to attend the meeting.
- Disseminate meeting notes in a timely manner.
- Have team meetings frequently enough to allow sufficient time for development, yet not so frequently that team members become overwhelmed.
- Develop creativity in covering shifts (e.g., supervisor from another work site, temporary worker, off-duty DSP from another work site) and in scheduling meetings to encourage attendance at team meetings and to model the importance of teamwork in the work environment.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. To what extent and in what ways do you feel that turnover rates in the organization in which you work are related to issues of teams and team building? In what ways?
2. Have you been a member of a healthy team? If so, what qualities made that team especially effective?
3. What roles do the various people on your work team take on as team members?
4. What types of conflicts have the DSPs with whom you work experienced? What was your role as a supervisor in intervening with these conflicts?
5. In what ways have you previously assessed how well your work group works as a team?
6. What activities have you used to facilitate team building among the DSPs you supervise? How successful were these activities? How might you modify these activities in the future?

7. How effective do you think a self-directed team might be within your organization?
8. What challenges would you face if you tried to create a self-directed team environment within your organization?

CONCLUSION

Given the pervasiveness of staff turnover in community human services, reducing turnover and enhancing employee retention are critical. DSPs report that conflicts with co-workers is a critical factor in their decision to stay with or leave an organization. One key strategy to help DSPs work more effectively and to deal creatively with conflict is to establish work teams. Knowing about, training others in, and using effective team processes is important in reducing turnover; teams can reduce misunderstandings and conflict and build cohesiveness.

For established work teams, providing targeted training and using needs-based teamwork learning activities can be energizing and help achieve new outcomes. In addition, understanding the stages of team development, recognizing common signs of trouble within teams, and evaluating the effectiveness of team functioning can help organizations find success. This chapter has provided ideas, tools, and reasons that supervisors and managers need to develop effective teams and evaluate their work.

RESOURCES

Rees, F. (1997). *Team work from start to finish.* San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

This book focuses on two factors essential for teams: getting work done and building and maintaining the spirit and momentum of the team. The book describes 10 steps teams can use to function more effectively: focusing the team, assigning roles, establishing guidelines, planning the work, doing the work, reviewing team performance, completing the work, publishing the results, rewarding the team, and moving on.

Sauer, J., O'Nell, S., Sedlezky, L., Scaletta, K., Taylor, M., & Silver, J. (1997). *An introduction to teamwork in community health and human services.* Cambridge, MA: Human Services Research Institute. (Available from the publisher, http://www.hsri.org)

This curriculum can be used to teach team members how to function efficiently together. It is based on the *Community Support Skill Standards* (CSSS; Taylor, Bradley, & Warren, 1996; see Chapter 6 for more information on the CSSS). Units include learning the basics of teams and teamwork, achieving success as a team, and tools and processes for enhancing team effectiveness. The curriculum also includes the handouts needed to teach the curriculum.

Team Performance Evaluation

On this evaluation form, *Task* refers to specific activities that the team is working on. *Process* refers to how well team members are or are not working together as a team.

1. Circle the numbers for *Task* and *Process* that best represent your level of performance as a team member during this work session. Discuss your responses with the team.

Personal performance

Task	1 Needs improvement	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Excellent
Process	1 Needs improvement	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Excellent

2. Circle the numbers for *Task* and *Process* that best represent your team's level of performance during this work session. Discuss your responses with the team.

Team performance

Task	1 Needs improvement	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Excellent
Process	1 Needs improvement	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Excellent

3. Jot down any insights you have gained as a result of the rating and discussion of your personal and team performance of *Task* and *Process*.

4. Identify any changes you would suggest for improving your own and the team's performance based on your discussion and insights. Be specific!

Personal	Team

From Sauer, J., O'Nell, S., Sedlezky, L., Scaletta, K., Taylor, M., & Silver, J. (1997). *An introduction to teamwork in community health and human services.* Cambridge, MA: Human Services Research Institute; reprinted by permission.

Team Facilitator Evaluation

Name of evaluator: _____

How long team has been working together: _____

Name of facilitator: _____

How long this person has served as facilitator: _____

Rate each item on a scale of 5 (*strength*) to 1 (*area to improve*), and list specific strengths and areas to improve.

Task	Strengths	Areas to improve
1. Bringing the group [members] back together if they begin to fragment into small discussion groups at inappropriate times 5 4 3 2 1		
2. Making sure members participate evenly so that some do not dominate while others never speak up 5 4 3 2 1		
3. Keeping [the] group focused on the topics on the agenda and moving the group along when discussion is no longer productive 5 4 3 2 1		
4. Helping the group to make a decision or reach consensus on a topic 5 4 3 2 1		
5. Informing the group when the time allotted for the agenda item has ended 5 4 3 2 1		
6. Working with the group to acknowledge that there is a conflict and to facilitate a resolution 5 4 3 2 1		

From Sauer, J., O'Nell, S., Sedlezky, L., Scaletta, K., Taylor, M., & Silver, J. (1997). *An introduction to teamwork in community health and human services.* Cambridge, MA: Human Services Research Institute; reprinted by permission.