Person-Centered Planning and Outcome Management

Maximizing Organizational Effectiveness in Supporting Quality Lifestyles Among People With Disabilities

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to those human service personnel, members and self-advocates who continuously strive to support people with disabilities in experiencing enjoyable and valued

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sufficiently to produce quality supports, services and outcomes for agency consumers day in and day out.

Chapter 8

Monitoring Attainment of Person-Centered Consumer Outcomes In Human Service Agencies

A critical component of outcome management in person-centered agencies is routine monitoring of consumer outcomes and staff work performance necessary for achieving those outcomes. Without proficient monitoring procedures, there is no way to determine if human service personnel are performing their jobs in a manner that results in desired outcomes for agency consumers. Relatedly, unless valued outcomes are routinely observed among consumers who receive an agency’s supports, there is no assurance that the outcomes are indeed achieved. In short, monitoring provides information to allow agency executives to determine if a human service agency is fulfilling its intended mission.

When agencies first begin to make the transition from a systems-centered approach to a more person-centered approach, monitoring consumer outcomes helps to measure progress and trouble-shoot necessary changes in programs, personnel, policies and procedures. Thus, information resulting from monitoring provides the basis for responsive and effective management in person-centered environments. If monitoring procedures indicate that consumers are not achieving person-centered outcomes at a desirable level, or that staff are not performing work duties in a competent manner, then agency management can take steps to improve agency operations. On the other hand, if monitoring procedures indicate that work performance is occurring proficiently and that consumers are routinely experiencing desired outcomes, then management can take active steps to support and maintain ongoing operations.

Systematic monitoring provides the basis for determining whether a human service agency is successfully providing the supports and services that it is intended to provide.

This chapter focuses on basic procedures for monitoring attainment of person-centered consumer outcomes in human service agencies. Procedures for monitoring staff work performance, as well as the
activities of other support team members, related to supporting consumers in attaining desired outcomes are discussed in the following chapter. A variety of monitoring procedures are described, each of which differs to a degree based on the types of outcomes desired to be monitored. However, to be successfully applied within an outcome management approach, each monitoring procedure must meet several basic criteria. These criteria, which represent the primary characteristics of successful monitoring practices for consumer attainment of person-centered outcomes and the activities of team members for supporting consumers in attaining the outcomes, are described in the next section.

Characteristics of Successful Monitoring Practices

Many human service agencies have implemented monitoring systems as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of agency supports and services. A large percentage of these agencies though have encountered serious problems with their monitoring practices. These problems, which are described in this and the subsequent chapter, have resulted in numerous agency leaders abandoning the practice of systematically monitoring and evaluating agency supports and services. However, the problems that agencies experience with procedures used to monitor consumer outcomes and related staff work performance are not inherent in the act of monitoring itself. Rather, the problems pertain to how monitoring procedures are implemented.

Because of the frequent problems associated with typical monitoring procedures in human service agencies, a significant amount of research has been reported on ways to ensure that monitoring is conducted in a successful manner. Such research has identified four basic criteria of successful monitoring practices in human service agencies. The criteria include: 1) a focus on relevant agency operations, 2) objective and accurate implementation methods, 3) monitoring processes functioning as a means to an end and not an end in and of themselves, and 4) acceptance of the monitoring procedures among consumers, staff and management.

Relevant Monitoring Practices

Within an outcome management approach for operating human service agencies in a person-centered manner, monitoring practices should focus on two aspects of agency operations. First, monitoring procedures should address the attainment of consumer outcomes that have been determined through a person-centered planning process to be desired by agency consumers and their families. Second, monitoring procedures should focus on how well agency staff and other support team members are performing activities that have been determined to be necessary for supporting consumers in experiencing the chosen outcomes. If agency monitoring practices do not address one of these two indices of agency supports and services, then the practices are not relevant from an outcome management perspective for operating a person-centered agency.

By now the recommendation that monitoring practices should focus on chosen outcomes among consumers and staff work activities necessary for achieving those outcomes should come as no surprise. Nevertheless, the point is repeated here because it is common to find considerable time and energy in human service agencies consumed with monitoring various aspects of agency operations that have no direct bearing on consumer outcomes derived from a person-centered plan. Many monitoring practices are established, for example, in response to perceived agency “crises” that are transient in nature or that really have no relation to consumer outcomes in the first place. Readers experienced with the Title XIX Medicaid ICF-MR review process in residential settings have undoubtedly observed agency monitoring procedures implemented following a Medicaid evaluative review that denoted concerns with certain agency operations. Often, the concerns expressed during the review reflect the values of the reviewers and not necessarily desired consumer outcomes derived through a person-centered process. Regardless, agencies implement monitoring procedures to help guard against concerns on the same issue arising during subsequent reviews, only to find that the concerns raised during the latter reviews change as the Medicaid reviewers change. The end result of this process is that agency staff spend considerable amounts of time monitoring something that has no impact on agency consumers attaining their desired outcomes — time that is taken away from relevant work activities.

In order to ensure that agency monitoring practices focus on relevant variables in human service agencies, monitoring procedures should not be implemented until the previously described processes for specifying person-centered consumer outcomes and related staff work activities have been completed. When desired outcomes have been specified through a person-centered process, along with the staff
work activities necessary to support consumers in attaining the outcomes, then monitoring procedures can be established to observe those two indices of agency effectiveness.

Unless monitoring practices focus on consumer outcomes derived through a person-centered process and on actions of support team members necessary to achieve those outcomes, then the practices are at best superfluous, and at worst, detrimental to operating an agency in a person-centered manner.

Objective and Accurate Monitoring Practices

Objectivity and accuracy are the cornerstones of effective monitoring procedures. Objectivity refers to monitors making decisions during the monitoring process about the existence of a respective consumer outcome or staff work duty based on well-established criteria. Objectivity that stems from clearly articulated criteria ensures that information resulting from monitoring practices truly reflects what is occurring with agency practices. In contrast, if explicit criteria do not exist, monitors must make decisions about consumer outcomes and staff work performances based on the monitors' own criteria, current mood, or personal value set. Although the individual criteria, moods, and value sets of different monitors are important phenomena in the workplace, they typically change from monitor to monitor and even within the same monitor across successive monitoring sessions. Information resulting from monitoring practices based on the latter decision-making processes is not likely to provide a true picture of agency effectiveness because the processes have more to do with the monitors than with the ongoing agency activities.

Problems with monitoring practices that are not conducted in an objective manner are well illustrated in meetings conducted around traditional individual program plans (e.g., Individual Family Service Plan, Individual Education Plan, Individual Habilitation Plan). It is common in such meetings to observe extended discussion over the relative worth of a certain agency practice or program activity for a given consumer. Essentially, every person participating in the meeting has a different view of the practice of concern because each person has monitored the practice — albeit often on an informal basis — using his/her own criteria or value set. Making an informed decision about whether to continue or alter the practice is essentially impossible because there is no objective means of knowing if the practice has fulfilled its intended purpose for the consumer.

To ensure monitoring procedures are conducted objectively, clear-cut criteria must be established with which to judge the occurrence of the consumer outcome or staff work performance of concern. If a person-centered process has been followed in determining desired outcomes for consumers, and the necessary team member activities to assist consumers in achieving those outcomes have been specified, it is usually a straightforward task to subsequently establish objective criteria for monitoring the occurrence of those outcomes and work performances. For example, if respective agency consumers desire competitive employment with support, then the monitoring of employment placements obtained and maintained during a given time period would be a logical place to begin the monitoring process.

Accuracy of monitoring practices is closely related to objectivity of monitoring. Accurate monitoring involves different monitors using the monitoring procedures in the same manner such that they observe and record the same information about consumer outcomes and staff work performances. Having an objective monitoring system, with well-established criteria for the outcomes and performances to be observed, is a prerequisite for an accurate monitoring system. However, a monitoring system's objectivity does not guarantee its accuracy. Different monitors may implement the (objectively based) monitoring system differently because some monitors are better trained than others, some monitors attend more to detail than others, etc.

The negative impact of an inaccurately conducted monitoring system is essentially the same as with a monitoring system that does not have an objective basis: the resulting information from various monitors does not present a true picture of the degree to which consumers are attaining chosen outcomes or to which team members are fulfilling designated responsibilities. A common illustration exists with monitoring systems in group homes for people with severe disabilities that focus on how effectively staff provide leisure activities results in active consumer participation in the activities. Various group homes have monitoring systems that periodically measure the degree to which consumers participate in leisure activities. A review of the results of the monitoring conducted by the on-site supervisor of the group home for a given month may indicate that
the community leisure activities desired by consumers successfully supported consumer participation during 80% of the monitoring checks (i.e., on the average, during leisure times 80% of the individuals living in the group home were actively participating in the leisure activities). However, a monitor who is external to the home, such as a regional supervisor who oversees several group homes, may conduct several monitoring checks and find that the activities result in consumer participation on less than 50% of the checks. Often the reason for the discrepancy in such cases is that the on-site supervisor is implementing the monitoring system in a different manner than the external monitor.

To avoid inaccurate monitoring, it is necessary to conduct periodic accuracy checks (also commonly referred to as reliability checks). Accuracy checks involve two monitors simultaneously yet independently monitoring the same outcomes or work performances. Accuracy checks typically should be conducted in this manner on approximately 20% of all monitoring sessions. A general rule of thumb is that if the two monitors agree on at least 80% of their recordings, then the monitors are sufficiently accurate. If the monitors agree on less than 80% of their recordings, then the reasons for the disagreements must be determined. Determining the reasons for monitoring discrepancies usually entails a re-study of how consumer outcomes and related staff performances have been specified, or re-training of monitors.

**Monitoring As A Means To An End**

The third characteristic of successful monitoring does not pertain to monitoring procedures per se but rather, how the results of monitoring practices are used within an agency. As indicated earlier, numerous human service agencies monitor different agency activities. Such monitoring can result in accumulation of a considerable amount of information about agency operations. In many agencies, though, the information is never put to any relevant use from a person-centered perspective. The data resulting from monitoring essentially is organized and then filed without impacting any important agency function.

From an outcome management perspective in a person-centered agency, information resulting from monitoring should be used either to implement changes in agency operations related to consumers attaining person-centered outcomes, or to actively support existing operations. Hence, monitoring data must be used to determine the extent to which agency operations and staff work performance support or hinder attainment of desired consumer outcomes. Unless the information resulting from monitoring is used in this manner to improve or maintain agency operations, then there is no reason to monitor consumer outcomes or staff work performance. In short, monitoring must be viewed as a means to an end and not as an end in and of itself.

Examples of failure to use information stemming from monitoring practices are readily apparent on an individual consumer basis in many human service agencies. A frequent practice in many agencies is to monitor a consumer’s progress in various programs, and especially in programs designed to teach an adaptive skill. To illustrate, a consumer’s program may involve teaching the individual to exit a residence safely during an emergency because the skill was identified as significant during the planning process for supporting the consumer in moving into a desired apartment and living more independently. The purpose of monitoring consumer progress in such cases is generally considered a means of determining the extent to which the program is effective in assisting the consumer in acquiring the target skill. However, in a number of cases a consumer will go for weeks, months, and even years with the monitoring data indicating no significant progress in the teaching program. In such situations, information from the monitoring has not resulted in changes being made in the teaching program to bring about more significant progress. Perhaps even more importantly, collected monitoring data have not been carefully reviewed to assess their impact on the consumer’s ability and time lines for reaching the desired outcomes. When information obtained from monitoring is not used to alter ineffective agency practices, such as ineffective teaching programs, then the monitoring is essentially a waste of everyone’s time.

Wasteful monitoring practices also can exist on an agency-wide basis, in which data are collected throughout an agency on a specific aspect of consumer outcomes or staff work performance. For example, the frequency with which staff provide consumers with choices of recreational activities may be monitored in an adult retirement center. The data obtained from the monitoring on number of choices provided to consumers is often sent to a central office for summar-
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within a given agency, consumers and family members are quite accepting of monitoring activities. In many respects, family members sincerely appreciate the concern of agency leaders for wanting to remain well informed and aware of agency activities — concern that is reflected in the implementation of well designed monitoring systems.

Concern for the impact of management’s monitoring procedures is especially important in regard to staffs’ acceptance of the monitoring. Even when monitoring procedures focus on attainment of consumer outcomes identified in person-centered plans, the procedures involve to at least some degree how staff are performing their duties in the work place. Chapter 9 concludes with a summary of strategies designed specifically for enhancing staffs’ acceptance of agency monitoring practices. Suffice it to say at this point that acceptability is a critical component of successful monitoring systems and should be considered prior to implementing any type of monitoring procedure in a human service agency.

Successful outcome management in person-centered agencies involves routine monitoring of agency operations in a manner that:

(1) is relevant to consumer outcomes and related staff work performances
(2) is objective and accurate
(3) leads to improving and maintaining respective agency activities
(4) is acceptable to consumers, staff and management

Case Study #1: Bloomfield
(Continued from Chapter 6)

Over the next few weeks, the teams finalized IRPs for the 25 pilot individuals, each with a unique dream statement about leisure, vocational and other daily or routine preferences. In addition, they presented a table to the Steering Committee summarizing the outcomes desired by the 25 consumers along with identified needs in staff training, staff job descriptions, transportation and access to petty cash. In addition, several changes in the IHP development process and on the IHP form itself were recommended.
the percentage of program steps a consumer has mastered on each program for a given time period. Most skill acquisition programs for individuals with developmental and related disabilities consist of a series of program steps (e.g., as in a task-analyzed teaching program). By focusing on the percentage of program steps mastered by each consumer for each program, a common basis exists for monitoring skill-acquisition progress across all consumers.

To apply the progress-review monitoring process across an agency's consumer population for those person-centered outcomes related to adaptive skill acquisition, an average percentage of program steps completed by all consumers must be obtained on a regular time frame. Many human service agencies already have various review processes in place for individual consumers on a monthly basis, which is typically a sufficient time frame for regularly monitoring overall consumer progress. In this manner, the average percentage of program steps completed across all consumers and all programs each month provides a single outcome indicator of an agency's success in assisting its consumers in acquiring adaptive skills as identified in respective person-centered plans.

The following figure provides an illustration of how progress of consumers in acquiring adaptive skills identified in person-centered plans can be graphically summarized for a respective group of an agency's consumers. The figure provides a quick means of monitoring and evaluating the agency's overall success in teaching desired skills to consumers. Data represented in the figure indicate that for this particular agency, on average consumers are successfully completing more program steps independently across months. The increased independence demonstrated by consumers generally indicates agency staff are successfully implementing teaching programs to support consumers in progressing toward skill-acquisition outcome goals.

Sample graph showing progress of consumers in acquiring adaptive skills identified in person-centered plans. The graph shows the percentage of program steps completed independently averaged across all agency consumers for each of eight months.

Because the indicator involving percentage of programs steps mastered by an agency's consumer population each month is an average, the indicator represents a rather global measure of the success of agency teaching endeavors. In this regard, a variety of variables can affect the average percentage of program steps completed by a group of consumers besides the effectiveness of an agency's teaching programs. Discontinuation of certain programs, admission or release of individual consumers from an agency's caseload, consumer absences due to extended illness, etc., can all affect the percentage figure from month to month. However, experience indicates that with one major exception, over time such variables tend to balance each other out such that the average percentage still represents a useful program indicator for overall agency management. The exception is when individual consumers complete an entire teaching program and then begin a new program. When new programs are initiated, consumers often are able to complete only a few steps of the programs relative to programs that have been in place for some time. Hence, if a large number of consumers master a program
in a given month, the percentage of program steps completed for the following month with new programs may be spuriously low.

To account for the effects of consumers completing various teaching programs and beginning new programs identified in their person-centered plans, it is helpful if monitoring systems for consumer progress include the number of teaching programs mastered by consumers on a monthly basis. The latter figure should be reviewed in conjunction with the average percentage of program steps mastered each month. By monitoring both the average percentage of program steps mastered across all consumers in conjunction with the total number of programs completed, a rather accurate picture can be obtained of the overall success of an agency in assisting its consumers in acquiring adaptive skills identified in person-centered plans.

Monitoring Ongoing Indicators of Quality Outcomes

Monitoring procedures associated with adaptive skill development as just described address outcomes that by their nature, take a period of time to attain. There are other important outcomes frequently identified in person-centered plans that are desired to occur essentially continuously, or at least on a daily basis. Many of the latter outcomes are taken for granted among the general populace and include such routine occurrences as eating desired foods, being happy, and spending time with friends or loved ones. For people with disabilities, and particularly for individuals who have more severe disabilities, such occurrences cannot be taken for granted. Significant effort is often required of support personnel to help ensure consumers experience these types of outcomes on a frequent or routine basis.

Because many important outcomes desired on a routine basis cannot be taken for granted, and effort is required among support personnel to help consumers attain these outcomes, it is important that agencies regularly monitor how consumers are experiencing routinely expected outcomes. There are several basic means of monitoring these types of occurrences, each of which varies somewhat based on the specific type of outcomes to be monitored and the severity of consumer disabilities. The most common of these monitoring procedures are described in subsequent sections. Elaboration and illustrations of other applications of the monitoring systems to be described can be obtained by referring to the Outcome Monitoring section of the Selected Readings.

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Self-Report Monitoring Systems. The most obvious and direct way to determine if a consumer is obtaining something the consumer desires on a routine basis is to simply ask the individual. To facilitate this type of self-report monitoring of consumer fulfillment of daily desires, a number of self-report and interview tools have been developed. These instruments systematically assess the views of individuals with disabilities on various experiences that are identified as being important to the individuals. Examples of instruments that address a variety of outcomes associated with quality of life include the Quality of Life Questionnaire, the Multifaceted Lifestyle Satisfaction Scale, and the Satisfaction Interview Scale (again, see Outcome Monitoring section of the Selected Readings).

Before describing how self-report measures such as checklists and interview instruments can be used to monitor person-centered outcomes that are desired to occur on a routine or daily basis, a primary qualification warrants mention. Self-report measures are only useful for assessing consumer opinions among individuals who have the expressive and receptive communication skills to validly respond to the questions that comprise these measures. Individuals must be able to understand the questions and have a means of responding to each question in a manner that is understood by the support person who is using the self-report format for monitoring purposes. The means of responding may involve idiosyncratic gestures, simple vocalizations, written responses or any number of alternative or augmented communication strategies such as manual signing, voice output communication aids (VOCAs), word/picture communication wallets, etc.

Once a determination is made that various consumers reliably demonstrate the skills to respond to a self-report monitoring system, then monitoring of the individuals’ experiences with day-to-day outcomes can proceed using the following steps. First, the outcomes of concern must be specified such that the occurrence and nonoccurrence of the outcomes can be clearly asked by monitors and answered by consumers. On the most basic level, such specification means that a consumer can clearly determine and express if the outcome occurred or not during a given period of time. The outcomes to be specified should of course be initially determined using person-centered planning processes.

The second step in the self-report monitoring process involves development of an instrument with which to ask each consumer
whether or not the consumer experienced the targeted outcomes during the designated time period. The instrument should have identified spaces to record consumer names, the name of the monitor who is administering the instrument, the date and each consumer response to each question. As indicated earlier, there are a variety of instruments available for such purposes. Frequently, these instruments consist of a standard set of questions about quality of life issues. The standard questions, although useful in their own right, often do not include questions about specific outcomes that have been identified in the person-centered plans of respective individuals. Usually agency personnel must prepare questions that specifically target the outcomes of concern for each individual.

Generally, the most useful types of self-report instruments involve questions that can be responded to with discrete "yes" or "no" answers or that can be answered on a Likert-type rating scale. The former questions are most appropriate for monitoring outcomes for which the primary concern is whether the outcomes simply did or did not occur during a given time period. Examples of these types of outcomes are reflected in questions such as "Did you see your friend today?", "Did you see the movie you wanted to see last week?", or "Did you go to town this weekend?". Assuming each of these experiences relates to something identified in the person-centered plan of an individual consumer, answers to the questions can provide agency representatives with a good indication of whether the agency is successful in helping the individual to routinely experience outcomes desired on a frequent basis.

In contrast to self-report instruments assessing whether a consumer experienced a desired outcome or not, Likert-type rating scales involve asking consumers to rate certain experiences. Rating scales are useful for those outcomes that cannot be answered on a straightforward yes or no basis, or for which more detailed information is desired. The most useful rating scales consist of a neutral point between the negative end of the scale and the positive end. The following illustration is an example of a typical scale for rating a consumer's satisfaction with various agency operations or daily experiences. The illustrated scale can be used to assess an individual's satisfaction with such things as the evening meal, specific recreational events, a job or one's general social life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE RATING SCALE FOR ASSESSING CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH ROUTINE AGENCY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extremely bad</td>
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The rating scale just illustrated has several noteworthy characteristics. First, there are 7 points on the scale. Research has indicated that although 7-point scales may be somewhat more difficult for some consumers to respond to, these types of scales tend to provide more valid information than scales with fewer response options such as commonly used 3-point scales. Second, because a consumer response is recorded on a numerical point (i.e., from 1 to 7) corresponding to the descriptor that describes the consumer's views, results of monitoring episodes with the rating scales are readily quantified. Such quantification facilitates evaluation of outcome monitoring over time.

The third step in the monitoring process with self-report measures is to develop a schedule regarding how frequently the measures should be obtained. The recommended frequency for monitoring various consumer outcomes differs based on a number of considerations. Specific guidelines regarding how frequently monitoring checks should be conducted are discussed in Chapter 9. On a general level however, monitoring checks should be conducted at a frequency that allows agency executives to feel comfortable that they have accurate knowledge regarding how often consumers are experiencing identified person-centered outcomes during routine conditions in the agency.

Using self-report means to successfully monitor consumer outcomes involves:

1) specifying outcomes such that their occurrence and nonoccurrence during a designated time interval can be clearly asked of, and answered by, the consumer (or responsible advocate)
2) developing an instrument that contains the questions to ask of the consumer
3) implementing a schedule regarding how often to ask the selected questions of the consumer
Direct Observation Monitoring Systems. In an outcome management approach, the most common means of monitoring consumer outcomes expected to occur on a routine basis is direct observation. Direct observation involves actually seeing the degree to which outcomes are being achieved or experienced. Direct observation procedures are heavily relied on in outcome management because there is no better way to determine if an agency is successful in assisting its consumers in attaining person-centered outcomes than to see proof of the outcomes being achieved.

Another reason direct observation is the primary monitoring approach used in outcome management is that self-report measures as described in the preceding section cannot always be relied on to provide valid information. Problems with the validity of self-report measures occur for a variety of reasons including, for example, insufficient skills among some persons with disabilities to respond in an informed manner to self-report questions, and hidden or subtle pressure for consumers to respond to self-report questions in a certain way. For these reasons, it is usually recommended that even when self-report monitoring systems are used, the systems be supplemented with direct observation monitoring.

There are a variety of types of direct observation procedures for monitoring consumer outcomes. Each type varies in large part based on the type of consumer outcome to be monitored. Specific monitoring systems most appropriate for a given situation also depend on which particular type of system is most easily used by the staff who conduct the monitoring. However, essentially all direct observation monitoring systems involve a sampling of consumer activity during a given time period. The primary types of direct observation systems are described in the following paragraphs.

One of the most practical types of direct observation monitoring systems for consumer outcomes is momentary time sampling. Momentary time sampling involves making a quick observation of what consumers are doing at a specific point or moment in time. The intent of such a process is to provide a “snapshot” recording of what is occurring with a designated outcome at that specific moment. By making repeated momentary observations, or snapshots, an accurate indication can usually be obtained as to the degree to which certain outcomes are being realized.

Momentary time sample systems are most useful for monitoring outcomes that are specifically expected to occur during certain time periods. For example, a desired outcome stemming from a person-centered process for a young adult with mild mental retardation might be to work in a supported job that involves working with workers who do not have disabilities. The intent of the monitoring may be to determine if indeed the individual is working with the nondisabled workers, in contrast to working on the job in an isolated fashion. To monitor the occurrence of such an outcome, quick observations may be conducted at different times during the work week by a monitor looking into the work area of the job and unobtrusively observing whether the individual is actually with the other workers at that moment in time. Of course what constitutes working “with” other workers would have to be defined, which should occur during the specification part of person-centered planning and outcome management (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Momentary time sampling systems are also advantageous for monitoring outcomes among groups of consumers. To illustrate, an agency may provide adult education services in settings for individuals with severe multiple disabilities. A desired outcome for individuals in the settings may be to actively participate in activities that enhance utilization of adaptive equipment, such as using switch mechanisms to activate compact disk players. To determine how effective the services are in achieving such an outcome on a routine basis, momentary time sample observations could be conducted periodically during the week. The observations would entail a monitor entering the specific education setting and immediately looking at each individual and recording which individuals are using, or being supported in using, an adaptive device at the specific moment each individual is briefly observed. If the services were having the desired impact, an analysis of repeated time samples would indicate that the vast majority of individuals were using the adaptive equipment across monitoring sessions.

A second type of direct observation system for monitoring consumer outcomes is interval recording. Interval monitoring systems involve observing an individual’s actions for a specified interval of time and recording whether or not a desired outcome occurred during any part of the designated interval. For example, a desired outcome for a teenager with moderate mental disabilities may be for the individual to interact socially with other teenagers in typical social
situations such as a high school club. Unobtrusive observations may be conducted periodically during club activities by a teacher who observes the individual’s activities for a series of consecutive one-minute intervals. For each interval, the teacher would record whether or not an interaction occurred during the respective interval.

Using an interval monitoring system, records can be maintained of the percentage of observation intervals for each separate monitoring session in which the outcome of concern occurred. Evaluations can then be made over time regarding the degree to which an agency is successful in assisting consumers in experiencing the outcome by comparing the average percentage of monitoring intervals during which the outcome was in existence.

Interval monitoring systems are especially useful for outcomes that are difficult to determine precisely when the outcomes begin and end. In the illustration just provided, it can be difficult to determine when a new interaction occurs versus the continuation of an ongoing interaction. With the interval system, it does not matter if an interaction is new or not, only if any interaction occurred during each respective interval.

A third major type of direct observation system for use with consumer outcomes involves continuous monitoring. In a continuous monitoring system, an individual’s activity is observed continuously for a given period of time and each occurrence of an outcome of concern is immediately recorded. Continuous monitoring systems are well suited for outcomes for which the beginning and end of the occurrence of the outcomes are easily discernable. Continuous monitoring systems are also best used with outcomes that are expected to occur at a relatively low but predictable frequency.

One of the most common applications of continuous monitoring systems is with certain types of problem behavior that occurs among some consumers with developmental disabilities. Problem behavior such as aggression toward others, temper tantrums, and property destruction is often monitored continuously in that whenever a respective consumer engages in the problem behavior, a recording is made by a staff person who observes the behavior. The outcomes of concern in these cases generally relate to participation in meaningful activities without the occurrence of the identified problem behavior. In order to determine if such an outcome is achieved (i.e., the problem behavior does not occur), continuous monitoring is usually necessary.

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Direct observation systems for monitoring consumer outcomes desired to occur on an ongoing basis include:

1) momentary time sampling
2) interval systems
3) continuous monitoring

**Monitoring Indicators Of Major Lifestyle Changes**

The monitoring systems just described pertain primarily to outcomes that are desired to occur routinely in the lives of consumers. There are other types of outcomes identified in person-centered plans that affect the quality of life of individuals with disabilities that by their nature, are not expected to occur on a routine or daily basis. The most important of the latter outcomes relate to major lifestyle changes.

One of the most important effects of a person-centered process is assisting consumers in making major changes in their lives that significantly enhance their life quality. Major lifestyle changes that may result from a person-centered plan include obtaining a highly preferred job, developing a network of new friends, purchasing a house, and choosing a compatible roommate. An outcome management approach can greatly enhance an agency’s effectiveness in successfully supporting major lifestyle changes that are identified through a person-centered process. As repeatedly stressed already in this chapter, if outcome management is going to be used successfully within a human service agency to help consumers achieve respective outcomes — including major lifestyle changes — then monitoring of those outcomes is necessary.

Monitoring the occurrence of many lifestyle changes such as acquiring a preferred job or moving into a chosen apartment usually is rather straightforward. These types of events are readily apparent when they occur. Other lifestyle changes identified in person-centered plans are not as straightforward or easy to monitor such as realizing a dream of expanding one’s network of friends or becoming a more active member of one’s community. In these instances monitoring may be accomplished by quantifying the desired outcomes. In the first example, a relationships map developed during the initial person-centered planning activities might be compared with a relationships map developed one year after the initiation of person-cen-
tered activities, in which the number of new friends is counted. In the second example, places and day-in-the-life maps developed before and periodically throughout the implementation of person-centered planning might be compared to count number of community sites visited, percentage of time spent in the community or number of valued social roles (e.g., employee, homeowner, volunteer) assumed by a consumer according to a quality-of-life checklist.

Despite the ease of monitoring many types of major lifestyle changes, this aspect of agency management is frequently overlooked or only partially completed. Few agencies regularly monitor and maintain usable records regarding the degree to which their consumers experience desired lifestyle changes identified in person-centered plans.

Monitoring lifestyle changes among consumers in a manner that enhances an agency’s success in supporting the occurrence of such changes involves three basic steps. First, time lines must be established as part of the person-centered planning process in terms of when agreed upon lifestyle changes should take place. Second, records must be maintained as to when the changes actually occur. Third, responsible agency personnel must review the records to maintain an awareness of the degree to which the designated changes occurred as planned.

One practical means of performing the monitoring processes just summarized involves establishing monthly summaries of the success of the agency in supporting consumers in making desired changes. In brief, monthly records are maintained regarding the percentage of lifestyle changes across all of an agency’s consumers scheduled to occur during a given month that indeed did occur during the month. This process provides a running account of the agency’s effectiveness in achieving very important outcomes in the lives of its consumers (i.e., percentage of scheduled lifestyle changes that were actually achieved). Because the types of changes being addressed are rather extensive as exemplified earlier, a monthly basis for reviewing the occurrence of the changes usually is sufficiently timely. A daily or weekly monitoring process as described previously with the monitoring of outcomes desired to occur on a more routine basis typically is not necessary because major lifestyle changes usually do not occur on a daily or weekly basis.

Chapter 9

Monitoring Staff Work Performance Related to Attainment of Consumer Outcomes

Monitoring work activities of staff that are identified as necessary for assisting agency consumers in achieving person-centered outcomes is as important as monitoring consumer outcomes themselves. For many consumer outcomes to be achieved, human service staff must fulfill a variety of job duties in a consistent and competent manner. As discussed in this and preceding chapters, it should not be assumed that staff work performance will automatically occur as desired. Rather, successfully managing human service agencies in a person-centered manner involves taking active steps to ensure that staff perform work duties proficiently. One of those management steps is systematic monitoring of staff work performance on a regular basis.

The characteristics of successful practices used to monitor staff work performance as part of an outcome management approach to operating person-centered agencies are the same characteristics as described previously for monitoring consumer outcomes. Specifically, the practices need to be relevant, objective and accurate, a means to an end, and acceptable. Of particular concern in this chapter is the acceptability of agency practices used to monitor staff work activities. Without special attention and care by management, staff monitoring systems often lead to staff disgruntlement and related morale problems. This chapter, includes a discussion of strategies specifically designed to ensure that procedures used to monitor the work performance of human service staff are well received.

Outcome management procedures for monitoring staff work performance involve the same basic processes described earlier for monitoring attainment of consumer outcomes in person-centered agencies. These monitoring procedures include self-report, time sampling, interval monitoring and continuous observation strategies. Descriptions of the component procedures of each of these types of monitoring systems were provided in Chapter 8 and hence, will not be repeated here. However, how each type of monitoring system can be applied specifically to staff work performance that relates to supporting consumers in attaining outcomes identified in person-