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Sample Data and Documentation Quality Assurance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Data quality assurance (QA) standard operating procedures (SOPs) can help your organization or program put processes in place to monitor data quality and take action to address possible issues. Developing and following these procedures can help make data quality assurance part of your culture and routine practices. SOPs can improve your data not just through having a consistent framework for resolving problems that may arise, but also by building staff confidence and dedication to quality data.

While your SOPs will vary to meet your organization's or program's needs, they should at a minimum include processes for:

- **Checking individual data quality**
- **Discussing data quality with direct service staff**
- **Data quality audits by supervisors**
- **Following up on issues in a timely manner**

As a starting point, this template describes sample SOPs in the context of a case management program. It is intended to be modified to suit your organizational needs: in some areas, sample alternatives are indicated in ***pink italics***. To adapt this template, first identify relevant roles and responsibilities, define your key QA tools, refine QA procedures (including timeframes), and train participating staff. You may also consult Switchboard's [Data Quality Assurance & Compliance Checklist] for additional QA considerations.

A sample case file review checklist is also included at the end of this document, to be adapted as appropriate.

Data and Documentation Quality Assurance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

I. Staff Responsibilities

Direct Service Staff	*Direct Service Staff*, such as caseworkers, who work directly with clients and have case file documentation responsibilities: • Conduct self-review of data and documentation quality. • Correct data and documentation issues after Supervisor or peer review. • Conduct peer review, if applicable. • Adhere to SOPs and performance objectives.
Supervisor(s)	*Supervisors*, who manage direct service staff and who have primary responsibility and accountability for overall case data and documentation quality: • Train Direct Service Staff on case file documentation, data entry, and data quality assurance responsibilities. • Review results of self-review and spot check select cases. • Communicate findings to team and Executive Director. • Support Direct Service Staff in meeting SOPs and performance objectives. • Hold Direct Service Staff accountable for addressing data quality issues.
Executive Director (ED)	The *Executive Director*, who oversees the Supervisor(s): • Holds direct reports accountable for implementing the SOPs and achieving performance objectives. • Makes necessary changes to program policies and design based on case file review results.

II. Quality Assurance (QA) Tools

Caseload Spreadsheet	Spreadsheet following a standardized template, password-protected with data validation and conditional formatting where possible, provided to each caseworker to track all the clients in his or her caseload. Includes columns for all required demographic information as well as program benchmarks or key data points.
Master Spreadsheet	Spreadsheet that combines all Caseload Spreadsheets into a single document. As long as all staff use the same, standardized template, separate spreadsheets can be combined into a Master Spreadsheet for aggregate QA, analysis, and reporting.
Alternative: Database Report	Database report that lists all clients in the program, along with demographic information and program benchmarks or key data points. Able to be filtered by assigned staff (e.g., caseworkers) to allow review by staff individually as well as by Supervisors or all staff as a group. Enables review of both aggregate and individual-level client and outcome data as part of the QA process. Can be used in place of Caseload Spreadsheets and Master Spreadsheet.
Case File Review Checklist	Paper form that lists each item required in the case file as well as expectations for quality of narrative case notes. Mirrors the standardized case file order. May include scoring, for example, by tallying the total number of corrections needed (with the goal being a low score). Tracking scores can help Supervisors monitor staff and motivate healthy competition among team members.

III. Procedures

1. Standardize Data and Documentation Quality Performance Objectives

Frequency: During initial onboarding and biannual performance review periods

Purpose:
- ✓ Ensure accountability for case file documentation and data quality among staff.
- ✓ Provide a framework for disciplinary action, when needed.

Supervisor(s) and Executive Director
i. Ensure job descriptions include relevant data and documentation responsibilities, including QA. ii. Communicate performance objectives to staff during initial onboarding and performance review/goal planning periods (e.g., "Direct Service Staff perform data quality self-review weekly for all files identified"; "Direct Service Staff have data quality issues in fewer than 25% of case files reviewed"). iii. After implementation of SOPs for at least 1 year, identify any needed changes in staff performance objectives.

2. Conduct Individual Data and Documentation QA (Self-Review)

Frequency: Weekly, during time set aside for case data and documentation review (e.g., Thursdays from 1-5pm. No walk-in appointments are accepted during this time.)

Purpose:
- ✓ Ensure quality data and documentation practices early in service period.
- ✓ Facilitate communication between Direct Service Staff and Supervisor(s) regarding both data and documentation quality.
- ✓ Reduce the number of cases requiring second-level data QA.

Supervisor(s)
i. Using *Caseload Spreadsheet* (***Alternative***: *Database Report*), send Direct Service Staff list of clients reaching first benchmark period (e.g. 30 days from enrollment in program) for data QA self-review. ii. Discuss self-review with Direct Service Staff during next supervision meeting, identifying trends and training needs. iii. Track Direct Service Staff QA results or "scores" in a central location, identifying training needs and performance issues.

Direct Service Staff
i. Using list from Supervisor, review client data on *Caseload Spreadsheet* (***Alternative***: *Database Report*), to identify gaps or errors in data entry (e.g., blank cells in demographics or program benchmarks). Enter missing data in spreadsheet. ii. Using list from Supervisor, review physical case file, including case notes, against *Case File Review Checklist*. Use checklist as a guide to update case notes and other required documentation. Identify items missing client signatures so that they can be prepared for signature during next meeting with client. iii. Notify Supervisor when self-review is complete. Provide Supervisor with completed *Case File Review Checklist* for each case under review.

3. Conduct Team Data and Documentation QA

Frequency: During Weekly (***Alternative***: Biweekly) Team Meeting

Purpose:

- ✓ Connect data and documentation quality to quality of service delivery.
- ✓ Support team approach to data quality; highlight examples of quality data.
- ✓ Show areas that need improvement.
- ✓ Inform data and documentation quality performance objectives.

Supervisor(s)
i. Display *Master Spreadsheet* (***Alternative***: *Database Report*) during meeting and review data for clients reaching second benchmark period (e.g., 60 days from program enrollment). ii. Discuss each case's data and documentation quality. Identify actions needed to address gaps or errors (such as blank cells for demographics or outcome data). iii. Discuss overall team trends, scores, and goals for upcoming period. Email summary to ED. ***Alternative***: Make item iii a standing agenda item in the monthly staff meeting attended by the Executive Director, rather raising during the team-only meeting.
Direct Service Staff
i. Email individual *Caseload Spreadsheets* to Supervisor prior to meeting so they can be compiled into single document and sorted/filtered. ii. Compete follow-up actions identified above. iii. During the next meeting, provide updates on actions taken for each case.

3. Spot Check Select Cases for Data and Documentation Quality

Frequency: Every other week during time set aside for case data and documentation review

Purpose:

- ✓ Spot check data and documentation quality before the end of the service period.
- ✓ Inform data and documentation quality performance objectives.
- ✓ Show areas that need improvement.

<table>
<tr><th>Supervisor(s)</th></tr>
<tr><td>
i. Review Master Spreadsheet (Alternative: Database Report) for cases nearing end of service period (e.g. 15 days prior to end of service period) and select 25% (Alternative: 20%, 30%, etc.) for review, including:
• At least 1 file from each Direct Service Staff member
• 50% of any new (<6 months in role) Direct Service Staff's case files
ii. Review case data using Master Spreadsheet and files using Case File Review Checklist; record scores.
iii. Provide Direct Service Staff with completed/scored Case File Review Checklist, highlighting any urgent issues.
Alternative: Rather than checking cases themselves, Supervisors select cases and assign them to peer reviewers, who return completed and scored Case File Review Checklists to Supervisors.
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<tr><th>Direct Service Staff</th></tr>
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i. Make corrections to case files within 2 weeks of receipt of Case File Review Checklist; share corrections with Supervisor(s) during next supervision meeting.
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Sample Case File Review Checklist

	Complete	Partially Complete	Absent	Not Applicable	Comments	Action Required?
Client Name:						
Arrival Date:						
Case Number:						
Enrollment Date:						
Required Forms						
Eligibility Documentation						
Intake Form						
Case Note Log						
Pre-Assessment						
Post-Assessment						
Service Plan						
Release Form						
Referral Form						
Form A						
Form B						
Form C						
Form D						
Form E						
Case Notes						
Notes in chronological order						
Notes are clear and concise						
Notes indicate if interpretation provided						
Service X is case noted						
Service Y is case noted						
Service Z is case noted						
					Total Corrections Required:	

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