

Peer-to-Peer File Review Ensures Case Management Best Practices

Overview describing the innovative best practice

CMJTS employment specialists Peer-to-Peer (P2P) file review is an innovative practice used at CMJTS as a method to ensure that all required case file elements are in place for enrolled participants. It has the added benefits of helping to train new employment specialists (ES) in file organization and maintenance and ensuring a smooth transition if it is necessary to transfer a participant from one employment specialist to another. Because it is an informal file review, not a formal “monitoring”, P2P is a “non-threatening” practice that allows staff to learn from one another, provides a forum for suggested general improvements in overall file organization, and supports a culture of cross-training that encourages experienced staff to share best practices with new staff. The ultimate result is improved and consistent customer service that meets or exceeds program requirements.

P2P typically takes place at a specially scheduled program staff meeting. Employment specialists, selected by the supervisory team, bring all of their participant files, which are distributed randomly to the other ESs. Each ES has a P2P checklist of items to look for in each file. This checklist includes completed paperwork required by the program, additional CMJTS required items, and a file organization outline. Each ES then reviews another ES’s file and checks for each required item. At the end of the review, the file is returned to the original ES with the checklist, including any comments the reviewing ES may have. Comments range from “great file, I was able to find every item quickly” to suggestions for improvement. Conversely, the ES is likely to see for themselves how their files can be improved. If suggestions for improvement are included, the original ES takes the file back to their office to make the necessary changes. As ESs are put in the role of “monitors” they can better understand the importance of policies and procedures. The overall results of this internal practice are apparent when CMJTS is monitored by its funders. CMJTS consistently receives high praise from its monitors for having organized, complete case management files and regularly receives exemplary monitoring reports.

The following is taken from the most recent DEED monitoring report,

“ III. BEST PRACTICE

The Grantee uses a “Peer Review” process to review counselor files for compliance with Federal, State, and Local requirements. Several counselors bring in their entire caseload and they review each other’s files based on a “scoring sheet”. In addition to compliance issues the counselors review Individual Employment Plans (IEP) for completeness and current updates, file order, case notes and that the 30 day client contact was maintained. Case notes are written in the third person and are not accusatory but factual. Anyone reviewing the file should be able to know what the current status of the participant is, what services they have or will receive along with appropriate documentation.”

Jobseeker impact (i.e. benefits, outcomes for jobseekers)

Job seekers are unaware of these internal best practices but they benefit by receiving consistent services, regardless of which CMJTS office or ES they work with. Participants receive a high level of service because P2P has created a culture in which the ESs share best practices, brainstorm solutions to problems, and contribute ideas to supervisors and managers on how to improve CMJTS case management practices. All counselors at CMJTS have a common understanding of what the case file and by extension where the customer experience should begin and how it progresses. By codifying this piece of their jobs, ESs are able to concentrate on providing excellent, individualized customer service. Additionally, the scrutiny of peers can be more affective in performance management than a supervisory review.

Community impact (i.e. benefits, outcomes for non-jobseekers)

The community and businesses ultimately benefit by having high quality job training services available year after year for the local workforce.

Identification of those involved, including collaborators

All CMJTS staff including ESs, supervisors, program managers, leadership, and executive team members at CMJTS benefit by having this best practice support the CMJTS mission “to strengthen central Minnesota communities through leadership in workforce excellence”.

In addition, the DEED monitoring team considers this a best practice both for case file maintenance and for front line staff training.

Leveraging/alignment of outside resources

This best practice is effective across all employment and training services that require case management including WIA adult and youth programs, dislocated worker programs, and public assistance programs.

Ideas for replication/lessons learned

Peer-to-Peer File Review

- Is an inexpensive way to address any case management issues, whether it be compliance or case noting. This was especially helpful this year when CMJTS hired temporary staff to meet the increased demand for case management services;
- Improves productivity by standardizing files across a service area – a particular challenge when operating programs over an 11-county geographic area;
- Makes files easy to monitor both for DEED or US DOL, improves relationships and makes future work and goals easier to accomplish;
- Contributes to staff retention by valuing staff input and staff involvement;
- Contributes to building our brand and reputation in WSA 5 for excellent customer service; This is evidenced by CMJTS receiving DEED’s award for *Provider of the Year* and a CMJTS employment specialist receiving DEED’s *Counselor of the Year Award*.
- DEED is submitting Peer to Peer File Review as a best practice to the US Department of Labor