

Hello FOCUS Participants!

In November 2014, I sent out an email message regarding some shifts in training and consultation delivery within the FOCUS pilot project. In essence, the message was that the four regional TTAPs would now be offering the majority of FOCUS training so that FOCUS Consultants could spend more time offering direct consultation services to participating programs (through on-site visits and various methods of virtual support).

We have gathered some meaningful data over the past three months as to how this shift has affected FOCUS.

Some Positives:

- TTAP and FOCUS Consultants have increased their knowledge about ways in which their service delivery is the same and ways in which it is different.
- Participating FOCUS programs have learned more about their regional TTAP offices and the variety of support the TTAPs offer.
- Regional TTAPs have learned more about FOCUS and its requirements.
- In general, communication and relationship building has increased between FOCUS and the TTAPs.

Some Challenges:

- There is confusion about FOCUS training requirements (i.e. equivalencies, the order in which trainings may be taken, etc.).
- There has been a lag in data sharing between FOCUS (training needs per region) and TTAP (how much FOCUS training to schedule in their already busy training calendars).
- FOCUS participants have expressed concerns about being able to meet their Star level goals within their planned timeframe due to training barriers.

Thank you for keeping us informed about these successes and challenges! This is all part of the pilot process, and more specifically, about system-wide Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). CQI involves creating action plans for quality (PLAN), implementing those plans (DO), Studying the effects of those plans in action (STUDY), and finally enacting more permanent structural and procedural changes for the good of the system as a whole (ACT). *Please see pages 27-30 in the FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality to learn more about CQI.* Here is what we learned from our FOCUS training action plan of November 2014:

What We Have Learned:

- The need for FOCUS trainings among participating programs is larger than expected! Many programs have embraced the FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality (commonly referred to as the Criteria or “green book”) and have become ready for verification at record speed! WOW!

- While regional TTAPs will remain the first source of FOCUS training for participating programs, FOCUS Consultants must provide more training than originally anticipated.
- FOCUS Consultants must share “training needed” as well as “training completed” data in an organized and ongoing manner with TTAPs.
- TTAPs must share “training capacity” and “training completed” information with FOCUS in an organized and ongoing manner.
- FOCUS Consultants, TTAP Consultants and participating FOCUS program staff must have their training questions answered in a more clear and timely manner. Information must be readily available and consistent.

What We Are Now Doing Differently:

- FOCUS and TTAPs are formally sharing training data on a quarterly basis in order to better meet the needs of participating FOCUS programs. An example of this data sharing at work is that we have recognized that the daytime FOCUS cohorts that TTAPs were offering in some regions have not been as effective as anticipated. These are being phased out and a more flexible training schedule is being developed.
- FOCUS and TTAP Consultants are collaborating on an almost daily basis to problem solve as unique training challenges arise. There will always be unforeseen situations. This is where our relationship-based approach makes all the difference. Please know that FOCUS and TTAP Staff members are dedicated to your success! We want you to meet your quality goals!
- As soon as possible after joining FOCUS, FOCUS Consultants will assist participating program directors (or FOCUS Designees) to develop a formal training plan for their program as a whole and for each individual staff member. The responsibility for monitoring this plan lies primarily with the director or FOCUS Designee.
- If a participating FOCUS program cannot have all of their training needs met by their regional TTAP, *FOCUS Consultants will work with TTAP Consultants to arrange additional training sessions.* It is very important that all stakeholders truly understand what this training partnership means. It means that participating program staff (especially program directors/FOCUS Designees) must assume primary responsibility for assuring training requirements are understood and met. TTAPs will remain the first source of FOCUS training provision. FOCUS Consultants will train as well but are **not** able to offer individual training sessions for individual programs simply upon request. This level of support, while understandingly attractive, is not sustainable!
- Questions about training requirements, equivalencies and the order in which trainings must be taken are being addressed in the following ways:
 - 1) The FOCUS Feedback form remains available on newmexicokids.org. The email glitch has been corrected. Feedback goes directly to Alejandra. Alejandra may respond herself or she may direct your question or

concern to another individual who specializes in the topic. Please keep using this form!

- 2) FOCUS updates and newsletters are posted regularly on newmexicokids.org as well as sent to the list-serve of FOCUS participants. Please, please, please make sure we have your current, correct email address!
- 3) FOCUS Leadership has met to determine training equivalencies. Approved training equivalencies will be shared with FOCUS participants and other stakeholders as soon as possible!
- 4) All FOCUS and TTAP Consultants will have current, accurate information about training requirements, equivalencies and the order in which trainings must be taken.

FOCUS on Young Children's Learning in New Mexico is a high stakes initiative receiving national attention. Everyone involved feels both the excitement and the pressure as our state is looked to as a model for quality. New Mexico is approaching TQRIS (Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System) in a way that has never been done before. We are not rating quality based solely on scores from tools such as the ECERS-R or the CLASS. We are using well-established tools like these to inform and improve practice, but we are FOCUSing on the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) and the Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process (AODCP) to reach our quality goals for young children's learning. This is where New Mexico stands out. We not only have state standards for early learning (as most states do) but we are using them in an authentic way to ensure the full participation of each child. Participating in FOCUS requires a serious commitment to training on the ELGs and AODCP. We are also committed to using a CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) process with stakeholders at all levels to unify our early childhood support systems in New Mexico. This is big! This is stressful! This is an opportunity unlike any we have had before to stand up for what is developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant for all young children in our state. It is also an opportunity for early childhood professionals in New Mexico to take ownership of their own journeys toward quality. It is ultimately the individual program leaders, the FOCUS Designees and their staff, who will raise and sustain quality in New Mexico's early childhood programs.

Thank you all for your ongoing commitment to FOCUS! Keep the feedback coming!

-Mary