



# **OVERVIEW FOR PROVIDERS**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION:**

The Consumer Quality Team of Maryland (CQT) is a consumer- and family member-run program dedicated to improving quality oversight of the public mental health system by recording and addressing individual consumers' satisfaction with the services received. We are housed at the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) and funded by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) of the State of Maryland.

CQT makes site visits to mental health facilities. Our teams listen non-judgmentally to what consumers tell us during voluntary qualitative interviews. While we share this information with program staff and the Core Service Agencies (CSAs), CQT is not an advocacy organization.

Our focus is on the individual consumer. We partner with consumers, providers, and funding agencies to present, discuss, and find resolutions to problems experienced by individuals served through the public mental health system.

Our reports provide immediate feedback to providers and a mechanism for timely resolution of consumer problems and concerns. We also relay accolades about staff, programming, services, and how they support consumers' strides towards recovery.

The regularity of CQT site visits and the feedback process provides programs and the Mental Hygiene Administration the opportunity to hear and review consumer's experiences over time. This process results in systemic feedback that enables the mental health system to meet consumers' needs on an ongoing basis.

## **CQT HISTORY:**

CQT is the final product of many years of cooperative planning. Based on the reported success of other consumer quality programs, a team formed in the 1990s to advocate bringing this program to Maryland. This Working Group included consumers, family members, providers, advocates, CSAs, and DHMH. The Working Group evaluated similar programs in other jurisdictions and concluded that the Consumer Satisfaction Team, Inc. (CST) of Philadelphia was the preferred model to reach Maryland consumers.

CQT began as a pilot program in three counties in 2006, began an expansion program in 2007 and will serve all counties in Maryland by 2011.

## **WHAT WE DO:**

### **Site Visits:**

CQT makes site visits to Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs (PRPs) and inpatient mental health facilities serving adult consumers. The first three (3) visits to each facility are planned and announced. This gives staff, consumers and CQT the opportunity to learn about the program and establish a plan for subsequent unannounced visits.

Whenever possible, CQT will conduct site visits without interrupting that day's programming. CQT staff work with providers to establish the best days and times to visit. Each site is visited between three and six times a year in order to reach the largest number of consumers.

### **Qualitative Interviews:**

During our visit, consumers volunteer to be interviewed on a first-come, first-served basis. In order to facilitate an open and honest discussion, CQT sets up in a private and accessible space. Each interview takes place between two trained CQT Interviewers and one consumer.

Interviews are consumer-focused, consumer-led and qualitative. Extensive notes are taken with the permission of the consumer. Interviews usually cover an individual's satisfaction with the program, specific needs, and overall quality of life.

### **Immediate Report to Staff:**

CQT meets with program staff before leaving the site. During this meeting, the team shares an overview of consumers' comments and any individual requests for which we have permission to use the consumer's name. Many general and specific concerns are immediately addressed or resolved by program staff as a result of the post-visit meeting.

### **Written Report:**

Within ten days of the site visit, CQT furnishes the program director with a written report. The report includes an index of anonymous consumer comments about the program and services, as well as a list of individual issues brought to the attention of staff. Consumer names are never included in the written reports. The report is also forwarded to the CSA of that county.

### **Feedback Meeting:**

Every month, CQT convenes with representatives from the CSAs, provider associations, and MHA for a Feedback Meeting to review site visit reports and review consumers' concerns. Issues are addressed, referred, or resolved at the table. Each CSA provides CQT with a written report documenting all decisions and actions.

## HOW WE CAN HELP:

CQT can help improve individual consumers' quality of life, the quality of mental health services, and consumers' satisfaction with the public mental health system.

***Individual Concerns:*** Individual consumer's requests are often addressed immediately by program staff or with assistance from the CSA.

***Program Concerns:*** CQT is a source for real-time feedback about consumers' satisfaction with programming, staff, procedures, and communication. Many programs use CQT Site Visit Reports in their internal quality assurance processes.

***System Concerns:*** CQT provides policymakers with information about the needs and wants of the consumers served by the system, allowing them to assess successful program models as well as areas in need of improvement.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP:

### **Site Visits:**

CQT partners with providers to establish the best procedure for making site visits to each program. During site visits, program staff can assist the CQT teams by:

- Meeting with CQT upon arrival to discuss any program changes and any recent issues.
- Finding confidential space for interviews that is accessible to consumers.
- Informing relevant staff that CQT is at the program.
- Allowing CQT to make announcements at a morning meeting, in groups or over a PA system.
- Reminding consumers throughout the day that teams are available for interviews.
- Meeting with CQT at the end of the site visit to hear general feedback and specific concerns and providing feedback. Staff comments often help to define and clarify what consumers are reporting.
- Sharing any information with relevant program staff.

### **General Awareness:**

In between site visits, programs can maintain consumers' and staff's awareness of CQT as a resource by:

- Posting CQT fliers in a general area for consumers to see.
- Reminding consumers they can contact CQT by phone with a comment, suggestion or concern.
- Sharing CQT Site Visit Reports with staff.

Programs can also keep CQT informed of updates and news about their program by:

- Adding CQT to any distribution lists for newsletters, etc.
- Keeping CQT informed of staff or program changes.
- Requesting CQT make a site visit in response to program changes.

## **Feedback Loop:**

The unique feedback process of CQT allows the consumer's voice to be heard by the people in the system with the ability to address or resolve concerns and use feedback for program and system improvement. Program staff can facilitate this process by:

- Providing CQT teams with relevant feedback about any actions they have or will take in response to consumer's requests, concerns, comments or suggestions. This information is included in the Site Visit Report.
- Discussing CQT Site Visit Reports with the CSA.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **Does CQT do audits or investigations?**

CQT does not conduct audits or investigations. The purpose of a CQT Site Visit is to collect unbiased, objective information about consumers' satisfaction with the services they receive from a facility. This information is given to the director of the program or facility and the CSA for that county. It is also reviewed by the Mental Hygiene Administration.

### **Does CQT verify comments or complaints?**

CQT listens non-judgmentally to what consumers share about their lives, their needs, and their satisfaction with the services they are receiving. In some cases, consumers will discuss a particular problem, concern, or incident during an interview. CQT staff will ask follow-up questions to determine the nature and scope of the issue and, depending on the preferences of the consumer, will refer the consumer to an internal or external resource, alert program staff to the issue, and notify the CSA.

Comments or complaints can be verified by the program and/or the CSA. CQT may also report team member's observations to program staff and alert staff to concerns or comments echoed by multiple consumers.

### **What agencies receive CQT Site Visit Reports?**

CQT Site Visit reports are sent to the director of the program or facility and the CSA for that county. All Site Visit Reports are reviewed by MHA at the monthly Feedback Meetings.

### **What kind of information does CQT receive?**

CQT Site Visit Reports include the information consumers choose to share during interviews, the comments staff provides during the meeting with CQT at the end of the site visit and any observations of the CQT staff during the site visit.

CQT does not collect data about programs or the public mental health system. CQT does not use a standardized data collection instrument or generate scientific findings based on a random sample of a population, nor validated the information given by consumers. The information collected reflects the feelings and beliefs of the individuals who choose to be interviewed on any given day; thus it should not be used as an independent tool to

evaluate a provider or a program. Still, as CQT makes site visits to programs throughout the state, some things are reported over and over and themes emerge.

CQT publishes an Annual Report each year. In the 2008 Annual Report the majority of consumer comments were favorable. The most frequently reported comments indicate consumers found that program staff members were dedicated, friendly professionals who help them on their journey towards recovery. These comments were followed in frequency by positive comments about programs and classes.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

### **JOANNE MEEKINS**

*Director*

(T) 410-235-1314, option 2

(F) 410-235-5102

(E) [jmeekins@cqtmd.org](mailto:jmeekins@cqtmd.org)

### **KATHRYN (KATIE) ROUSE**

*Program Manager*

(T) 410-235-1314, option 3

(F) 410-235-5102

(E) [krouse@cqtmd.org](mailto:krouse@cqtmd.org)

### **DONA WIGGINS**

*Program Assistant*

(T) 410-235-1314, option 4

(F) 41-235-5102

(E) [dwiggins@cqtmd.org](mailto:dwiggin@cqtmd.org)

*Updated January 2009*