



# BENEFITS OF COA ACCREDITATION

INTEGRITY • IMPACT • ACCOUNTABILITY

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- Offers national and external validation of performance
- Helps to focus, track, and package good service and management practices that an organization uses to operate daily
- Builds infrastructure to support excellence in performance
- Expresses concept standards and encourages work in measurable program output language
- Has positive impact on the workforce and on accountability
- Builds accountability in management by using a qualitative Self-Study process
- Demonstrates evidence-based practices
- Provides measurement tools in the form of administrative and service standards
- Documents practice through Self-Studies
- Establishes credibility that the organization is effective and professionally sound
- Demonstrates accountability in management of resources
- Constitutes a facilitative process
- Supports positive outcomes
- Builds staff morale
- Provides an external review conducted by experts from around the country and, if appropriate, validates the agency's documentation of performance as outlined in the Self-Study
- Places the organization in a strong competitive position
- Shows a high degree of commitment to comparing agency practices to national standards
- Supports federal measures and provides evidence-based documentation for consent decrees
- Sets standardized best practice thresholds for service and administration
- Creates a framework for ongoing performance quality improvement

- **Improves Workforce Morale and Community and Public Confidence**

GAO visited Illinois during its workforce study and found that accreditation there and in Kentucky improved staff morale, enhanced the agencies' reputation with the press and corresponded with improvement in quality assurance measures (August 3, 2004 Workforce & Accountability Report, page 2).

- **External Validation That the Organization Has Met Accepted National Standards**

Accreditation has a direct bearing on how a service environment operates and how an agency organizes personnel and processes to continually improve its performance and service delivery outcomes and environment, including supervision, peer support (Cicero-Reese & Black 1998), and organizational climate (Glission and Hemmelgarn 1998).

Accreditation, with due consideration of the relevance of standards and processes, helps reduce the pressure agencies feel to demonstrate results and plays a role in helping agencies to build sustainable capacity to implement procedures that produce positive outcomes.

- **Stimulates Organizational Improvement and Increases Program Effectiveness**

- Changes that occur as an organization pursues and maintains accreditation can have a profound effect on both its internal operating systems and on how it interacts with a community of service providers. In sum, the very culture of an organization often does shift in some positive fundamental ways as a result of the decision to pursue accreditation (McDonald & McCarthy 2000; Miller 2003).
- Accreditation supports an organization in increasing its performance, being more efficient, more targeted in service delivery, and more vigilant in case management and supervision in order to achieve better outcomes.
- The Children and Family Services Reviews and accreditation support improvement of systemic factors that are known to influence outcomes, including implementation of a quality assurance system and basic information system; a participatory case review system; an adequate array of services; responsiveness to community; and standards for foster care and adoption. (Georgia Academy Journey 1997; Weiss 1977)

- **Facilitates Uniformity in Practice Without Compromising Flexibility**

The incorporation of the Council on Accreditation standards statewide facilitates uniformity in implementation and performance of national best practices. The accreditation process institutionalizes performance quality improvement as a management tool through which the organization develops new initiatives, monitors progress, takes corrective actions and learns. For these reasons, accreditation supports the organization's efforts to document progress related to audits, consent decrees, and external standards.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT COA ACCREDITATION

“The Self-Study process proved to be a well thought-out and organized road map which challenged us to think about what we did, how and why we did it and how we might change in order to better meet the needs of our customers.”

*~Laura Cooper, Executive Director, Lee County Youth Development Center  
(COA accredited since July 2004)*

“Yes, it was a great deal of work, but we are already seeing the benefits in the way we do business and marked changes in our practices.... Our staff has really gotten into this – ‘I take this personally’ is often a comment – and are striving more than ever for perfection.”

*~Penny Morrill, CEO, Sunrise of Pasco County, Inc. Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Center (COA accredited since March 2004)*

“I saw [accreditation] as a key strategy for changing the organizational culture from one of striving for mediocrity or feeling oppressed, to one where the folks owned the change, they owned the improvements, they actually took charge... There is nothing more powerful to change the organizational culture in a distressed agency than accreditation.”

*~Jess McDonald, former Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, Managing Care for Children and Families, Volume V, Number 1 Summer 2003  
(IDCFS has been COA accredited since June 2000)*

When asked by the Milwaukee Business Journal what their “smartest move” was in strengthening their organization, Phyllis Mensh Brostoff and Valerie Stefanich of Stowell Associates SelectStaff answered, “Obtaining national accreditation by the Council on Accreditation.”

*~The Milwaukee Business Journal, January 13, 2006 (Stowell Associates SelectStaff, Inc. has been COA accredited since 2000)*

“Other than assuring the people we serve receive the highest quality of services, accreditation gives us an opportunity to develop and maintain an organizational culture of best practice and program excellence. It is an important instrument to demonstrate our credibility, efficiency and effectiveness.”

*~Christopher Leung, Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Social Services,  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada (COA accredited since 1998)*

"COA's Contextual Accreditation is truly field-driven. Those who play critical roles in COA's accreditation process have all had first-hand experience in the respective fields of practice in which they provide expertise. This network of experienced professionals enables COA's accreditation process to be sensitive to today's rapidly changing service delivery climate. If this is the environment in which you provide service, accept nothing less than a fully field-driven process for your accreditation!"

*~Sister Ann Patrick Conrad, Associate Professor, National Catholic School of Social Service, The Catholic University of America*

"We chose COA accreditation because it allows for a comprehensive review of the entire agency – both its administration and management functions as well as a wide range of specific services – including domestic violence and sexual assault programs. It was also very important to us to have standards that were a match with our philosophy and values."

*~Carla Blinkhorn, President & CEO, YWCA of Grand Rapids (COA accredited since 1996)*

"Simply going through the accreditation process meant that children will be safer and families will have an opportunity to be stronger."

*~Karen Bristow, Clinical Associate for the Lake Cumberland Regional Office, Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, CFC Online, December 2002 (COA accredited since October 2002)*