Commitment, Communication, and Creativity Pay Off

In 2006 Anoka was among the Minnesota counties identified as having a significant impact on the statewide error rate - and not in positive way! Anoka met the problem head on and volunteered to be among the first counties that Tracy O’Brien, Payment Accuracy Coordinator, and her coworkers visited to perform a blitz case review. Armed with the specifics provided by that review we began our battle with the dreaded Food Support Error Rate.

Supervisors launched their own blitz effort by reviewing Food Support cases of staff in their units. We created a database to track Targeted Food Support Reviews to ensure we met our initial goal to review a valid sample of our total Food Support cases. We recognized immediately that case reviews were a great way to identify error prone areas, work directly with staff making the errors and develop focused training that made a difference.

We expanded our reviews and supervisory staff currently review as many cases as possible prior to initial approval and at recertification. The Anoka County Income Maintenance Director and Managers committed both time and resources to our efforts. Food Support Accuracy became a focus for our monthly Training Committee meetings which all supervisory and management staff attend.

We launched a campaign to educate staff and gain their commitment to improving overall performance. We made it fun using a game called Policy Bowl where we focused on one aspect of Food Support policy and offered prizes for the person with the most correct answers. Specific policy reminders and communications are sent to all staff using an email communication called Policy Point.

Food Support became a standing agenda item on All Staff meeting days and we engaged staff using a variety of different approaches. All Staff meetings provided the perfect forum for sharing information on the statewide error rate. It was clear that when the state missed being sanctioned in 2007 by only $38 everyone understood what a difference they could make for the entire state if they made one error on one case.

Thanks to the commitment of our staff we went from a case error rate of 12% with a dollar error rate of 10% to a case error rate of 5.1% with a dollar error rate of 1.1% for fiscal 2008. In Anoka County commitment, communication and creativity equals success!