Case Reviews

One of the most successful tools in attaining and maintaining high payment accuracy is a good case review system. Many states mandate case reviews because they have proven to be an integral part of their overall management of the program by providing managers and supervisors valuable information on the quality and timeliness of case determinations. Information gathered from case reviews allow states to determine the root cause(s) of errors and thereby identify specific areas needing corrective action, such as policy clarification, refresher training, changes in office procedures, improved case record documentation, system changes, etc.

There are a number of different approaches to case reviews:

- **Short Term Projects** - Case reviews conducted on a targeted sample of the caseload usually focused on specific error prone elements of the case record for a short period of time. These projects are generally undertaken to gather information needed to address a particular problem(s).

- **Case Sweeps** - This type of case review can be targeted toward the most error prone cases, such as earned income cases, or it can be a review of most or all, cases in the caseload. Sweeps have shown to be effective when there is a high error rate that is not localized to a particular geographic area or particular policy. When conducting a case sweep, all staff that can be spared is temporarily diverted to complete case reviews for the project. Case sweeps ensure a large number of error-prone cases are corrected. However, to keep these cases correct, the extensive findings data collected must be analyzed immediately to obtain a clear understanding of the root cause of the errors so corrective actions can be implemented.

- **Peer Reviews -** Case reviews conducted by another eligibility worker within the same unit or, in some instances, units within the same office switch cases for review. Peer reviews are generally conducted prior to benefit approval or very shortly after benefits have been issued. Most workers would prefer to have a co-worker find their mistakes than their supervisor. Peer reviews provide another set of eyes to catch missed information reported but not included in the eligibility determination, helps to reinforce policy knowledge and finds and corrects errors in a large number of cases.

- **Supervisory Case Reviews -** Either targeted or thorough case reviews conducted by supervisors. Generally there is a mandate that supervisors conduct a required number of reviews each month following a prescribed procedure. These reviews are an excellent management tool for supervisors to track the accuracy and timeliness of benefit issuance. They provide information on staff that may be behind in work or need additional training and contribute to the overall accuracy of the unit, office, project area and State.

- **Third Party Reviews** - A re-review of a sample of case reviews to determine the accuracy of the reviews being completed by workers, supervisors or a special team of reviewers. All effective case review systems include a third-party review process. A third party review ensures that those conducting initial case reviews have an accurate understanding of policy

and are spending the time needed to conduct a thorough and accurate review. These re-reviews maintain the integrity and consistency of the review process.

- **New Worker Reviews** - This involves a thorough review of all cases completed by new employees, prior to benefit approval, to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the program and are determining benefits accurately. These reviews are generally conducted by the immediate supervisor for the first 6 to 12 months of employment.

- **Targeted Case Reviews** - Reviews focused on specific error prone cases and/or elements of the case. They are effective in isolating and correcting specific types of errors within an office or State. The specific error prone elements are generally identified through other types of case reviews.

Through case review it is possible to gather real-time data needed to determine the types of errors being made and the root cause of those errors. The results from the reviews are most beneficial when they are made available to management within a one to two month timeframe after the case review is complete to allow for a proactive approach in finding solutions to address the causes of errors. Case reviews alone, without analysis and understanding of the causes of the errors and trends, is non-productive. It simply becomes a "find and fix" and the next time the case is touched, the same error could easily be repeated. This data provides vital information for correcting cases and identifying problem areas. It is also an important step to holding staff accountable for their work.

Tips for conducting case reviews:

- Develop a case review sheet that collects detailed findings information.
- Implement a system to track cases found to be in error to ensure corrections are made timely and accurately.
- Analyze the findings in a timely manner, the sooner the better.
- Determine the root cause of the error. For example, it is common to assume that because there are a lot of errors occurring related to a particular piece of policy, the workers need to receive refresher training. Before settling on that conclusion, check first to be sure the policy is clearly written, the computer system is properly programmed to handle the policy, and there are no procedures in place that could be causing the errors.
- Develop and implement corrective actions immediately once the root cause has been discovered.
- Conduct a targeted review 6 to 12 months after implementing the corrective action to ensure the problem has been effectively resolved.