COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION

MAXIMIZING ACCREDITATION'S IMPACT

We at the Council on Accreditation (COA) know that the accreditation process requires a significant investment of resources for programs. Our goal was to alleviate the challenges and make the experience even more intuitive, meaningful, and relevant, all while increasing efficiencies, maintaining rigor, and adding value.

With that in mind, we are excited to announce some enhancements to our accreditation standards and processes with our 2021 CYD Program Accreditation! COA continually evaluates what we offer to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our accredited programs and the communities they serve. We achieve this through continuous feedback from our programs, reviewing best practices within our service areas, and ensuring that our standards are aligned with and grounded in comprehensive research.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

To increase the impact of accreditation by focusing COA's standards and processes on those practices and activities that will have the greatest effect on the people and communities COA-accredited programs serve, while ensuring that our mission-driven programs are equipped to meet changing operating environments and the evolving needs of the people they serve.
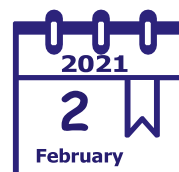
WHO IS AFFECTED?

All child and youth development (CYD) programs.

WHEN IS IT HAPPENING?

2021
1 February
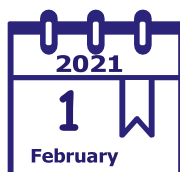
Standards released on COA's website/portals.

2021
2 February

Standards assignments begin.

WHAT'S CHANGING IN OUR STANDARDS?

48%
Reduction in the amount of Administration and Management self-study evidence.

23%
Reduction in the amount of Service section self-study (ECE and OST) evidence

12%
Reduction in the number of Service standards

11%
Reduction in the number of Administration and Management standards

We have refined our standards by focusing on the standards that promote an impactful, mission-driven culture and equip programs to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. Reducing the number of standards and evidence to allow programs to commit more time and resources to those practices that have the greatest impact on individuals served and their ability to be an effective, sustainable, and mission-driven program.

HOW DID WE DO IT?

- To achieve the goal of maximizing the impact of our accreditation process, we:
- Surveyed agencies and peers for feedback on our process
- Relied on the effectiveness domains, which was our internal way of organizing what research was out there on effective organizations
- Eliminated or combined redundant standards within and across sections and reorganized similar content whenever possible
- Minimized Interpretations
- Moved research notes into the Reference List for each section
- Eliminated redundant evidence or documentation requests from across the various stages of the accreditation process

We also made targeted changes to the evidence required to address identified pain points for both volunteers and programs, including:
- Removing all narratives
- Removing requests for "descriptions of services" from the self-study evidence
- Minimizing requests for meeting minutes and clarifying the quantity that is needed when appropriate
- Standardizing how we ask for training documentation
- Revising language for On Site activities to: "Interviews May Include" and standardizing list of interviewees
- Standardizing how we ask for information on caseload or workload
- Eliminating Data Sheets from the service sections except where they may be provided as an optional resource for reporting information when desired
- Minimizing duplicative uploads during the self-study process by adapting the evidence upload technology and/or process

WHAT'S CHANGING IN OUR PROCESSES?

We have also made some updates to our processes to make them even more intuitive and relevant.

- We revised the standards update process from ongoing/monthly updates to semi-annual updates. This means that programs will have to commit less time and resources to monitoring update information on the website and MyCOA portal.
- We expanded the categories of Fundamental Practice (FP) standards to include practices that promote program effectiveness. FP categories now include Health and Safety, Client Rights, and Organizational Effectiveness. The definitions of those are as follows:

Health and Safety

Practices that promote the health and safety of personnel and service recipients. Health in this context is defined to include more immediate health concerns such as ensuring access to proper medical care. It is not intended to apply to longer term health or wellness topics such as healthy eating or exercise, although exceptions may be made when such practices are central to the goals or desired impact of the program.

Client Rights

Practices that promote privacy, confidentiality, respect, self-determination, and equitable treatment.

Program Effectiveness

Practices central to the development of impactful and sustainable program. This category establishes the critical relationship between essential management functions (e.g. hiring, supervision, and staff development) and a program's ability to have a positive impact on the people and communities it serves.

CHANGES TO SUPPLEMENTS

The expansion to the Programming Standards which were added in 2018 to include: Arts Education, Academic Skill Enrichment and Skill Development, College Career and Readiness, Health and Wellness, Homework Help and Tutoring, and Mentoring have been reintegrated into the body of the standards. This allows programs to select the appropriate programming standards through taking appropriate N/As.

THANK YOU

Thank you for continuing to be a part of the COA community. We hope that you find these enhancements to child and youth development accreditation valuable. We are excited for our continued partnership with you as these enhancements are rolled out.

Want additional information? Have any questions? If you are an in-process or accredited organization, please reach out to your Accreditation Coordinator. If you are seeking accreditation with us for the first time, please contact Mei-Lam Rice at (212) 871-1978 or via e-mail at mrice@coanet.org.