



Person-Centered Excellence

With Distinction

ACCREDITATION REPORT

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee

215 University Parkway

Johnson City, TN 37604

Susan Arwood, Executive Director



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OVERVIEW OF CQL PERSON-CENTERED EXCELLENCE WITH DISTINCTION ACCREDITATION

CQL Accreditation promotes excellence in person-centered services and supports that leads to increased quality of life. It's about continuous improvement. CQL Accreditation facilitates organizational development in person-centered services and supports and personal quality of life outcomes.

CQL's Person-Centered Excellence Accreditation is grounded in over 50 years of CQL leadership and peer-reviewed research. We focus on the critical elements that lead to increased quality of life for people.

This first virtual accreditation visit focused on:

- **Health, Safety, and Human Security, as evidenced by your organization's alignment with, and monitoring of, the *Basic Assurances*[®] (BA)**
Alignment with, and monitoring of, the *Basic Assurances*[®] ensures accountabilities for the fundamental and non-negotiable requirements for all human service providers. The visit focused on systems and practices and their effectiveness from the perspective of those supported by the organization.
- **Supporting personal quality of life as measured by the *Personal Outcome Measures*[®] (POM)**
Personal Outcome Measures[®] interviews demonstrate the linkage between personally defined quality of life and excellence in person-centered services, highlighting the importance of gathering and utilizing this data in planning and making change at both the individual and organizational levels.

This accreditation process focuses on:

- Implementation and commitment to Shared Values
- Maintaining and monitoring *Basic Assurances*[®]
- Continuous improvement towards Person-Centered Excellence
- Supporting personal quality of life as measured by the *Personal Outcome Measures*[®]

The agency also demonstrated:

- It has been through one complete accreditation cycle, in addition to being named a Person-Centered Organization by the state of Tennessee and working very closely with DIDD in *Basic Assurances*® accreditation reviews.
- Robust quality improvement strategies with accompanying relevant data
- Organizational transformation
- Evidence that the agency does not have systems and practices in place that allow floor restraints, "takedowns," or standing orders for restraints.
- Use of time-out rooms.
- Use of "as-needed" psychotropic medications for behavior control.
- Use of corporal punishment, seclusion, noxious or aversive stimuli, forced exercise, and denial of food or liquids (that are part of a person's nutritionally adequate diet).
- Evidence of advocacy efforts (self-advocacy and supports, local, state, and national systems advocacy).
- Evidence of person-centered planning and person-directed planning meetings.
- Evidence of innovative strategies to support people.

For additional information, please refer to the following attachments and manuals:

- *Basic Assurances*® Manual
- *Basic Assurances*® assessment results
- Shared Values Manual
- Shared Values assessment results
- Person-Centered Excellence Manual
- Person-Centered Excellence Results Data
- Person-Centered Excellence Short-Term Plan
- *Personal Outcome Measures*® Manual
- *Personal Outcome Measures*® Summary Report (if applicable)

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Prior to accreditation, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee provided CQL with the following information regarding its mission and vision and a brief organizational profile of the organization's services and supports.

Mission:

We are committed to empowering people with intellectual disabilities to live a shared vision of a valued life in connection with family, friends, and community life.

Vision:

People with intellectual disabilities participate in, contribute to, and are valued members of their chosen community.

Biography:

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, (d.b.a.), a division of Washington County Community Residential Services, Inc., is a 501 (C) (3) private non-profit organization supporting people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities in Northeast Tennessee. The agency was originally founded in the 1960s as The ARC of Washington County, later known as Washington County Community Residential Services, Inc. Services provided initially were those of support to parents and families of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Soon thereafter, a residential group home for females was established. In 1997, a ruling came about that any agency receiving federal funding through the Department of Mental Retardation could not provide both case management and residential services under the same corporate name. Therefore, on March 1, 1997, residential services were removed from the Arc of Washington County and placed under the old corporate name of Washington County Community Residential Services, Inc. In the late 1990s, the board of directors approved a name that was believed to fit more appropriately "Core Services of Northeast Tennessee." In recent years the agency has been through a transformation. Core Services of Northeast Tennessee holds four-year Person-Centered Excellence Accreditation through CQL|The Council on Quality and Leadership. The agency has completed Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities requirements for designation as a PERSON-CENTERED ORGANIZATION. Since 2018 the agency has been recognized by the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities as an "Enabling Technology Transformation Agency" and a provider mentor through the DIDD Tennessee Employment First Leadership Initiative (TEFLI).

ORGANIZATIONAL CERTIFICATION

To be eligible for accreditation, CQL requires certification of all local, state, and federal regulations. Additionally, evidence of ongoing data collection and analysis of assurances of health, safety, and human security is required.

Prior to the virtual accreditation activities, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee certified that it complies with all required local, state, and federal regulations relevant to the supports and services it provides, including:

- Licensing and certification requirements
- Sanitation/fire and safety codes
- Reporting compliance for incidents, abuse, and/or neglect
- Any other that may apply

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee affirmed that there are no current open or unresolved issues related to:

- Outstanding fiscal or legal sanctions
- Non-compliance with regulations
- Licensing exceptions
- Unfavorable third-party reviews
- Significant abuse, neglect, mistreatment, or exploitation, or other circumstances being investigated by external entities
- Local, state, or federal entities investigating abuse, neglect, or other circumstances
- Any related circumstances that require a plan of correction to remain licensed, certified, or funded
- Outstanding negative publicity

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee confirmed that the organization has:

- Current external monitoring reports and responses for all services and supports provided
- Current external monitoring reports and responses for all licensed buildings while also meeting all required safety/compliance standards
- Clear policies that state the procedures for meeting local, state, funding, and federal requirements
- Current plans of correction showing all outstanding issues have been (or are being) addressed

PROCESS

CQL, in collaboration with Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, facilitated a variety of activities as part of this accreditation process, which includes:

- **Organization Self-Assessment**
The organization completed and submitted an in-depth self-assessment of organizational systems and practices related to *Basic Assurances*® and Shared Values prior to the virtual accreditation visit.
- **Off-Site Meetings**
The organization's leadership team participated in several planning calls before the virtual accreditation.
- ***Basic Assurances*® and Shared Values Validation**
CQL facilitated a rigorous assessment of the organization's systems and practices related to *Basic Assurances*®, Shared Values, and *Community Life*® through a variety of virtual activities, including but not limited to document and policy reviews, targeted interviews, site visits, and focus groups.
- ***Personal Outcome Measures*® Focus**
CQL focused on the organizational implementation of *Personal Outcome Measures*® on an individual and systemic level. Completed during the accreditation visit were targeted interviews, focus groups, and data reviews.
- **Person-Centered Excellence Focus**
The organization invited key organizational stakeholders representing a wide variety of constituents to participate in an interactive process focused on enhanced organizational performance. CQL, organizational leadership members, and invited stakeholders worked collaboratively to develop an organizational plan focused on enhancing Person-Centered Excellence.
- **Plan Development**
CQL presented findings outlining current *Basic Assurances*® and *Personal Outcome Measures*® alignment. The organization subsequently developed a plan to enhance these areas based on results. Accreditation is awarded based on the development of this plan, acceptance of the plan by the lead reviewer, and maintained based on the implementation of said plan.
- **Next Steps Discussion**
CQL facilitated discussion of the integration of these plans into the organization's strategic plan and other organizational initiatives, additional resources needed, as well as ongoing reporting and collaboration for continued accreditation.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

SHARED VALUES

Values, beliefs, and expectations about people determine the way we provide services, supports, and resources. CQL conducted a variety of activities, including targeted interviews, document review, focus groups, site visits, and *Personal Outcome Measures*® conversations to determine the alignment of the organization's values with CQL's Shared Values standards.

Prior to the virtual visit, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee completed a detailed self-assessment of the Shared Values Factors. They also invited a group of stakeholders to share thoughts and advice about the organization.

CQL determined that **25/32** indicators for Shared Values are currently present for Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. Some strengths and opportunities include:

- “Core excels at celebration.”
- The culture at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee is self-reflective, inclusive, and transparent.
- The organization uses technology to support people to live the lives they want to live.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee is "getting out of the way" of people living their lives.
- The concept of the Dignity of Risk is embraced within the organization.
- There is genuine respect for all people as people first.
- The organization is encouraged to think about how it can contribute more to its communities.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee should look at what education, regarding limits of conservatorship, it can provide to all its stakeholders.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee is encouraged to educate themselves on the concept of Supported Decision Making and assist people who wish to choose this as an option to conservatorship.

See the full Shared Values report for details.

BASIC ASSURANCES®

Basic Assurances® address the provision of safeguards put into action from the person's perspective. *Basic Assurances*® requires policies and procedures or systems; one determines the system's effectiveness in practice or the implementation of the policy, person by person. These assurances are not statements of intent; instead, they are the essential, fundamental, and non-negotiable requirements.

CQL determined that **38/46** indicators for *Basic Assurances*® are currently present for Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. The following indicators were noted as not present in either system or practice:

- 1a – The organization implements policies and procedures that promote people’s lives. (system)
- 1b – The organization supports people to exercise their rights and responsibilities. (system)
- 1d – The organization upholds due process requirements. (practice)
- 4b – People are free from abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation. (system)
- 5a – People have supports to manage their own healthcare. (practice)
- 8c – The organization provides positive behavioral supports to people. (system)
- 8d – The organization treats people with psychoactive medications for mental health needs consistent with national standards of care. (system and practice)
- 10a – The organization monitors *Basic Assurances*®. (system)

Strengths/Commendations:

- The organization has good systems for data collection and analysis.
- Strong advocacy efforts are in place within the organization.
- Solid staff education in rights and abuse/neglect is in place.
- Staff support and retention are very strong.
- The use of technology is used to promote independence in people’s lives.
- Person-centered and directed supports are strong.
- Employment for all people is a priority – based on what each person wants.
- Relationships important to the person are prioritized.
- Money management practices are evolving to support people having control over their financial lives.
- Responsive to personality conflicts/poor matches. Staff can be involuntarily transferred if the relationship is not working in the best interest of the person.
- The interview process changed recently to more of a behavior-based approach (use of scenarios). This change was preceded by talking to people about what is most important to them in staff.
- An incident review includes personnel on duty when the incident occurred.
- Employee satisfaction survey and stay survey information is shared, analyzed, and changes are made.
- Career ladders are made possible by using the NADSP curriculum.
- Retention is high, turnover is low, and the vacancy rate is low (compared to state and national averages).

Opportunities:

- Reassess current HRC practices regarding what is seen as a restriction.
- Take another look at the current rights assessment to ensure that all components of this indicator are included.
- Consider the use of Trauma-Informed Supports in the organization.
- Several policies should be updated to reflect current practice.
- Expand support for people to determine details of information sharing.
- Explore "non-traditional" jobs.
- Consider the use of technology for other medical supports.
- Update the *Basic Assurances*[®] policy to ensure all components of this indicator are included.

Attached to/with this document is a summary of the *Basic Assurances*[®] report, which includes complete details.

***COMMUNITY LIFE*[®]**

Community Life[®] is important because social support and local environment and infrastructure influence the quality of life for people with disabilities. The availability of health care, a strong economy and employment base, good transportation and communication, crime-free neighborhoods, and social and community patterns of support, tolerance, and diversity contribute to the quality of life. In fact, these community variables may be as important as direct service for promoting quality of life for people.

Prior to the virtual visit, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee completed a detailed self-assessment of the *Community Life*[®] Factors. They also invited a group of stakeholders to share thoughts and advice about the organization. Some strengths and opportunities include:

- The organization is known for mentoring other organizations that provide supports to people.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee's focus is on supporting people to have great lives.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee has a great reputation all over the state and country.
- Staff are consistent and focused.
- They have strong partnerships with colleges.
- They don't know the word "impossible."
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee supports people having real jobs, and that helps everyone in the community.
- The organization believes that advocacy should be focused on what people want and sharing their successes with the world to better the world for everyone.

- It would be great if they could support more people, especially people who need more health or behavioral supports.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee could consider expanding Supported Employment.
- More connection with high schools could benefit all young adults.
- Please figure out how to clone Core Services of Northeast Tennessee's philosophy at other organizations.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee is currently a hidden jewel: continue to expand awareness about its philosophy within the community, so everyone knows that they exist.

VISITS

Johnson City

CQL staff had the opportunity to virtually visit CNJ at their home on January 25, 2021. Along with T, their staff, J gave a brief virtual tour of their home. The home seems to be decorated to their liking—large television, fireplace, color-changing lights, instruments, etc. Spaces in the house seemed accessible, and nothing seemed locked except for medications. All of the gentlemen chatted with CQL staff and shared that they really like the supports they receive from Core Services of Northeast Tennessee—especially since Susan started. They also seemed to have a good rapport with staff—there was a lot of kidding and camaraderie. The gentlemen use some enabling technologies, including medication dispensers, phone applications, voice commanded electronics, lighting, etc.

One of the gentlemen is an amateur photographer, and some of his art is displayed in the home's common areas. He likes to take hikes and mostly takes pictures of nature. The gentlemen told stories of what they like to do, how staff supports them to live the lives they want, and their relationship with their conservatory. One told CQL that he is a self-advocate at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee and was quite proud of his badge. This same gentleman also told CQL that he does not like it when staff tells him what to do, so he has reminders on his phone.

The home seemed clean, safe, and well-supplied. All interactions were respectful.

Johnson City

CQL staff also had a virtual abbreviated visit with IPS on January 25, 2021. All three were seated at the dining table and were preparing to have a meal or had just completed one. Staff was washing dishes, and there seemed to be a lot of papers on the refrigerator. Iva and her support staff gave a brief tour of the home, and it seemed clean and well decorated. Two people showed off their rooms and told CQL about some of the things they have that are meaningful to them. One person's bed and nightstand partially cover her window and may prevent safe egress from the room if there was a fire. This was conveyed to the leadership team. S did not wish to talk. One person stated that she would like to cook, but the staff does it for her instead. She also said that she loves game shows and watching people win!

Johnson City

CQL had the opportunity to visit LW at his apartment in Johnson City on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. LW, along with his friend, A, and staff, C, gave a tour of his townhouse.

LW lives in his own place and states that he prefers to live by himself. He uses a wheelchair to get around and appears to move about his home okay. There are pictures of him and his family in the living room, along with his Core Services of Northeast Tennessee family, on the walls. He uses his tablet to open/close the front door, turn the tv on/off, and turn on overhead lights throughout the home. There is also a red help button in the living room that can be used for two-way communication with staff and the supervisor. He has another button in the living room that he can use to tell staff to leave the house because he wants privacy. LW has a front and back Ring doorbell so that he can check to see who is at the door. LW bedroom is full of NASCAR posters on the wall. LW has a green help button by his bed. It was originally used to tell people to be quiet as it says, "Silence, please." There is a button by the commode in the bathroom that signals "please help in the bathroom" when LW needs assistance. This is also used so that he can have privacy while using the bathroom. There are ramps at both the front and back doors to get into the home. LW has a washer/dryer in the bathroom. The house key is on the ring with the van keys to which he has access. There are two fire extinguishers—one in the laundry room and one in the kitchen. The home appears safe and clean, and LW stated that he feels safe in his home. All interactions observed were respectful.

Johnson City

CQL had the opportunity to visit with PBJ at their home in Johnson City on Monday, January 25, 2021. Staff C assisted with the tour. PBJ was chilling out watching tv in the living room, and PBJ assisted C with the tour. The living room had a large 70" 4K tv and an entertainment center with a faux fireplace/heater. There was a beautiful picture of a horse behind the large sectional with recliners in the living room. PBJ bedroom was right off the kitchen and was personalized with images of women, two comfortable-looking chairs, a tv, and several pictures.

The kitchen appeared clean and modern. Per C, the kitchen floors were just redone about one year ago. The refrigerator and freezer were packed with food. The buffet in the kitchen had two locked cabinets where medication is stored. There is also a first aid kit kept in an unlocked drawer in the buffet. Also in the kitchen was a bulletin board with information regarding healthy meal plans, DIDD service note changes, and information on the protection from harm investigation line.

PBJ showed off his bedroom, which appeared very comfortable and was personalized with multiple pictures of horses, a tv, personal pictures, and his shoe collection. John's bedroom

was large and personalized as well. His bedroom also had a large walk-in closet and a private bathroom.

The home has two bathrooms—one off the front room and then the one in John's bedroom. All the guys have access to the hidden key outside of the home. Everyone appeared happy and comfortable in their home, and no concerns or safety issues were noted during this visit. All interactions between staff and the guys living here were respectful.

Johnson City

CQL had the opportunity to visit with BW at their apartment on January 26, 2021. Staff Kerry provided the tour as BW was tired from a long day of putting together new bedroom furniture that had just been delivered, and BW was tired from work. Both gentlemen chatted with the reviewer throughout the tour. BW shared that he really enjoyed his recliner in the main living room and had purchased the living room furniture from his previous roommate when he moved out. There was artwork throughout the main areas of the home and BW room that he shared he had found online. BW brother was also present during the visit, helping BW move his old furniture out. It all reflected his personal décor style, mostly barns, old cars, and pretty ladies. BW had recently moved into the apartment due to wanting to live more independently and genuinely liking BW as a friend. BW room is the master bedroom of the apartment, and thus he has an attached bathroom. He also has an Xbox and enjoys gaming in his downtime, both solo and with others online. Both men have different supports but utilize technology at night if needed. BW uses a medication dispenser for his one evening medication, and BW has staff supports with his medications throughout the day, including the evening staff leaving his 7 a.m. medication out in his bedroom for him to take in the morning. Nothing is locked in the home, including the medications. The refrigerator/freezer, cupboards, and chest freezer were well stocked with food and supplies. The guys were both very content and happy with the current situation. BW is looking forward to more independence when he is ready for the next step. All interactions between staff and the gentlemen indicated she has a great deal of respect for them both.

Bristol

CQL had the opportunity to meet with C and his staff, A, on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. Staff A supported C in giving the tour by holding the phone and showing CQL what C wanted to show. He rents a two-bedroom trailer with his cats Daisy and Shadow and has lived in his trailer since May 2018. He adopted Daisy during the summer, and Shadow was gifted to him a week later by a friend. He was very proud to show that one of the bedrooms belongs to his cats, and that is where he keeps their litter box and extra supplies for them, as well as a comfortable chair in which they can hang out. His kitchen is well stocked with the foods he enjoys, and he has a second smaller refrigerator in his bedroom for his drinks. He was proud to show how clean and organized his home is and shared that he likes to keep his home clean, and A supports this choice. He is also a big fan of music and has a large

collection of CDs as well as a guitar that was gifted to him by his dad. C chooses to smoke outside on his porch, where he also has a BBQ grill used for cooking hamburgers and hot dogs. He is in the market for a comfortable chair for his porch at this time as well. Throughout the visit, nothing concerning was noted, and nothing is locked in his home. C does have access to technology during the nighttime, but it has never needed to be used. Staff shared that they have gotten notifications from his stove sensor that C left his stove on, which is corrected by calling C to remind him. His night call system is tested weekly to ensure it works if it ever is needed. He previously had an emergency alert bracelet, but that support was faded when it was clear it was not needed by C. Staff A was very respectful in all interactions that were observed.

FOCUS GROUPS

Self-Advocate Focus Group

Two focus groups were conducted with 14 people receiving supports from a variety of programs at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. The following feedback was provided:

What do you love about Core Services of Northeast Tennessee?

- They help me a lot with a job.
- They are nice.
- All of it.
- Going on rides in my car.
- I like it here; everything.
- I like my roommate.
- Celebrating my birthday

What do you know about your rights?

- We've all got the same rights.
- Going to work is a right.
- I have the right to find a job.
- A right to get paid for my work
- I have the right to privacy.
- Rights to spend time with family and friends
- Carry my own identification.
- Religion - I go to drive-in church.
- Voting
- Going shopping at Walmart
- Going places on weekends
- Reading magazines and picking out what I want to read
- Being at home.
- Choosing my own décor/furniture

How do you learn about your rights?

- From the staff here
- It comes up a lot.
- Brian talks about them and makes sure we understand them.
- Learning about options

What are the rules at your house?

- We decide what we want to do.
- We decide if people see us.
- There are no rules.
- Everyone can do what they want to at home.

Are you involved in any self-advocacy groups?

- Three people are.
- The other three said they did not want to be.
- One person has been a part of the DIDD focus group; they felt that things changed because of it, and because of it, he has more control of the things in his life and more communication.
- Another person shared that she had been a part of a focus group.

Who chose what you do during the day? Does anyone have a paying job?

- Six people have jobs, and one is retired.
- I want more hours; I'm broke (x2) (both feel they can't get the hours they want due to the pandemic but have had support to try to up their hours through conversations with supervisors).
- One person has two different jobs.
- One person would like to work and is working to find a job.

What do you do in your community?

- We go out to parks.
- Bingo
- I do less now because of the virus, but I can go where I want.
- Walmart
- Go driving around.
- Go for walks.
- Before the pandemic, I went to Dollywood one to two times a month; I want to do that again.
- One person is going on a cruise to the Bahamas in September.
- Many people reported going camping.

Has COVID-19 decreased the amount of time you spend in your community or at work?

- I wish it would hurry up and end.

- I wear a mask at work every day.
- My employer decided how much I could work.
- I don't want to get the virus, so I am not going as many places.
- I go to the bank and the grocery store with a mask on.

If you had a complaint, how would you report it? Do people listen to you when you have a complaint/concern?

- Report to Susan
- She fixes it.
- I have never had to complain.
- I would tell my mom.
- Whoever was working
- I'm not sure if they would do anything about it.
- I never had to complain about anything.

What are abuse, neglect, mistreatment, and exploitation? If any of these were to happen to you, what would you do?

- Everyone agreed they knew what these are and gave examples in the first group.
- No one knew in the second group.
- Report it to anyone at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee— they would take care of it. If not, go higher up to Susan.
- Can call the state.
- Can call the police.
- Everyone shared they have phones and the numbers they need to call the state/police.
- Call my sister and tell her.
- The group said no one has ever talked about it to them.

How are you supported to learn about your health supports/be involved with your healthcare?

- Screenings at the doctor
- See the doctor regularly—Jessie takes me.
- My sister helps me.
- Four people self-administer medications; others are okay with staff help.
- I watch what I eat.
- I eat healthy things like salads.
- I go to doctor appointments with staff; staff asks questions.
- I really like my doctor.
- I really don't like my doctor; not sure how to change it.

Who chooses your staff? How are you involved with that?

- I haven't interviewed my staff yet.
- I decide if they are going to keep working with me.
- The staff are really good.
- Things change, and they are here for a good reason.
- People report that they are not involved in evaluating their staff and do not want to be involved in this.
- I like my staff.
- I decide who my staff are.
- I can fire my staff.
- If I don't like the staff, I can
- Not sure how to change staff if I don't like them.
- Sit down and talk about the staff.

Who is in charge of your planning meetings?

- Us and our ISC—if there is a disagreement, we win.
- I am.
- I think I get to decide if there is a disagreement about what is in my plan.

Who chooses the goals you work on?

- Us and our ISC—if there is a disagreement, we win.
- I am.
- I think my sister gets to decide; I'm not sure if I can tell her no.

How are you supported to manage your own money?

- I put it in the bank.
- Most people reported that they carried some money.
- One person said they could have \$10 a month.
- Two people shared that they are working on independence with their money.
- No one knew how their supports were paid for but thought it sounded really complicated.
- I have a debit card.
- I bought a smart TV with my debit card.
- I have enough money to buy what I want.

If you were the CEO/person in charge of Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, what is the first thing you would do or change?

- I really don't know.
- Nothing
- Keep doing what she's doing.
- I'm not sure about that.

- She's doing a good job overall.

Direct Support Staff Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with 11 DSPs working at a variety of programs at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee on January 25, 2021. Tenure with the organization ranged from a few months to over 20 years. All DSPs participated in the conversation.

How would you describe the culture of the organization?

- The morale since Susan started has been a lot better.
- We are doing a better job of supporting people—we don't do "for" people anymore.
- There is less of a focus on just safety and more of a focus on supporting people to live the lives they want.
- Fun!
- Person-centered thinking training has helped shift the culture of the agency.
- Staff matter. People look out for us.

How would you rate communication within the organization?

- Communication is good!

What are the rules at the house?

- None, really
- Whatever people supported want

How are goals developed?

- We are part of the team. We help with the pre-planning process and attend ISP meetings.
- People choose their goals, and we support them to achieve them.
- Person-centered thinking training has helped us.

How are you taught to support people in the exercising of rights?

- Training
- Consistent values of respecting people's rights
- POM helps us figure out which rights are most important to people.

What is the role of the human rights committee?

- To protect people's rights—we have to be able to prove the restriction is needed.
- To make sure there are not too many restrictions.
- Both the circle of support and the HRC has to approve any restrictions.

How are you trained on behavior supports?

- By the behavior analyst or program supervisor

How do you support people to manage their own healthcare?

- Great nursing team!
- We are given information on diagnoses, medications, side effects, operations, etc.
- We help people make follow-up appointments, ask them their opinion on the visit, talk to them about what happened during the appointment.

How do you support people to develop, maintain, and enhance personal relationships?

- We take people places.
- Even during the pandemic, we continued to help people stay connected with their friends and family using appropriate safety measures.

Discuss training—orientation and ongoing

- Training is good.
- I feel/felt prepared to do my job.
- I can always ask for help if I need it or if I don't understand something.
- We have a great team, and we help each other.

Do you receive an employee handbook? Has each of you received an employee evaluation?

- All reported having received an employee handbook and routine evaluations. Evaluations have been recently changed and are more person-centered and behavior-based.

What do you know about *Personal Outcome Measures*®?

- All knew what POMs were and how they worked.

What are some opportunities for improvement within the organization?

- Expand!

What are some strengths of the organization?

- Culture
- I feel valued and respected.
- I feel safe, even during the pandemic.
- An unwavering commitment to person-centered thinking
- Good relationships—with people receiving services, teammates, manager, and leadership

- Leadership is always willing to listen.
- Can-do attitude (instead of previous can't-do attitude)
- Actively soliciting feedback and resolving concerns.
- A willingness to try new things

Frontline Supervisors Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with four frontline supervisors working at a variety of programs at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee on January 25, 2021. Tenure with the organization ranged from a few months to nine years. All members contributed to the discussion.

How would you describe the culture of the organization?

- True open-door policy
- Culture of respect and support
- Person-centered
- Fun!

How would you rate communication within the organization?

- Communication could always be better.

How do you support DSPs to help the people you support exercise their rights?

- Respecting rights is part of our culture.

How are you supported to be a good leader? How would you describe your relationship with DSPs?

- We have opportunities to attend conferences.
- The relationship with DSPs is good.
- We're trying to be more person-centered with staff, too.
- Our first response when someone makes a mistake is not punitive.

What supervisory/leadership training have you received?

- We learn from each other and upper management.
- Front line supervisor training from NADSP is going to be implemented.

What are the biggest challenges of being a supervisor?

- When we have to enact discipline

How often are you on call? Do you ever get a break?

- One day per week and every eight weekends

- I still answer my phone even when I'm not on call.

What are some opportunities for improvement within the organization?

- Expand!

What are some strengths of the organization?

- Commitment of DSPs
- Teamwork
- Support from colleagues
- Core accepts the challenges of supporting people in a person-centered way.
- The willingness to take risks and break down barriers
- Sharing the vision
- Ensuring people feel they belong
- Feeling valued, respected, included—my opinion matters.

Family Member Focus Group

On Tuesday, January 26, 2021, CQL met with eight family members and friends of people receiving services from Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. The following feedback was provided:

How would you describe the culture of the organization?

- Respectful
- Energized
- Client-oriented
- Consistent
- Caring
- Person-centered is alive and well
- Authentic
- Wonderful

How would you rate communication from the organization—transparency, timeliness (on a scale of one to ten)?

- I would rate a 10; they are very timely with communication (multiple people stated). I can text at any time, and they text back.
- It's unusual to have access to the director of a program like we do with Susan.
- I have everyone's cell phone numbers. Whomever I call, they answer, and I always get a callback.
- They took the time to think about things I might need as a sister to help during the pandemic.
- Always get the reply, "I'll take care of that."

- Communication is good. They are responsive.
- There are some areas for improvement. I do not have the ability to have that 1:1 everyday access like I could have living closer.
- Core would receive an A+ in everything except communication. They could get better; I would like to know about doctor's appointments and what the results are. I would also like to know about behavioral concerns in a timelier manner.

How are you supported to be involved in the organization's mission, leadership, and development?

- The first opportunity to participate has been with this focus group today.
- On the board of directors
- I have not really been involved in a lot in that way.
- I think they include family in a lot of areas, and they ask for input very well.
- They are transparent and partner with families.

How is your loved one supported to develop, maintain, and enhance their connections with family and friends?

- They take my brother out into the community quite often.
- My brother does not know a stranger. I talk to him on the phone every day.
- They support people to get to church.
- I love that they have the iPad so that they can FaceTime.
- Core does a very good job at helping people establish relationships and find things to do in the community.
- They take each person as an individual, not as a group. Programs are designed for individual people's needs.

What is the process for reporting a complaint/concern? Are you aware of the grievance procedure?

- I just text Susan.
- I would just call Susan or go directly to Susan.
- Contact either Susan or Nick or the case manager; it depends on the issue.
- I let Susan or Angie know. You do not have to worry about day-to-day things.
- The staff has earned the trust from me as a parent.
- I have never had to make a complaint.
- I am sure we get something on the formal process. I never had the occasion to do it.
- With this agency, I have not encountered any situation where I would need to formally submit a grievance/complaint. I trust Core Services with the life of my brother.

What would you change about the organization (where could they improve)?

- I do not know how they could change it to get better.

- I cannot think of any instance of where they could do things better.
- I would wish that the people that work there, including the DSPs, are getting paid what they deserve.
- I would change nothing.
- I would like to know when a doctor's appointment is scheduled so I can be there if I choose (several people stated).
- I would like to hear how things are going every couple of weeks (I have never asked for this before, in all fairness to the agency).

What are the strengths of the organization?

- Lockdown has been handled well.
- I cannot say enough about Core Services and their care.
- Core does a fabulous job.
- I believe that their primary focus is the client. They are first, and everything else falls behind that.
- Leadership is the key—it starts at the top. This is a well-led organization.
- Their style of working together as a team to accomplish goals is a tremendous strength.
- I've never known of an issue where everyone was not involved in helping.
- They work as a team, and they trust each other. The only goal is the individual person.
- They have built a good team.
- They try so hard to keep people involved in things they enjoy.
- The team is genuine and honest.
- The enthusiasm of every person at Core Services
- They do so much for people, and they are continually trying to roll out new ideas.

Innovative Services

On Tuesday, January 26, 2021, CQL had the opportunity to visit with nearly 20 people supported, DSPs, organizational leadership, DIDD staff, family, and community members associated with Core Services of Northeast Tennessee to discuss innovative strategies used by the organization to support people.

How do you define innovation?

- A new way of looking at things, a new way of doing things
- Breaking a mold.
- Other possible innovations are a consequence of enabling technology.
- Finding a new way to solve an old problem
- Pushing the boundaries of your field into the unknown
- Identifying an issue and how to solve that issue

- Taking a normal device that people use and coming up with these ideas on how that device can be used
- Putting together that idea to take normal things and make them better

Share some examples of innovative services at Core Services of Northeast Tennessee:

- Core goes above and beyond on how to educate staff.
- Pushing the boundaries—people living their lives, building services to fit around what people want in their lives
- Technology is one of the tools that has allowed us to reshape those services.
- In this field, barriers are often discussed, but we talk about “how can we do this.”
- LW has support needs that go beyond what most people thought was possible for independence. But he now can contact a staff person when he needs them. He uses a Ring doorbell cam, can press a button, and contact a person that can respond to any needs. He can control the lights and the television as well. Larry is the first person in the state/waiver system to be using technology in the way he is. We broke new grounds with him.
- Many people with iPads, communication apps, leisure interests, and FaceTime for building natural supports. The idea of having a focus group (panel) and practicing with people to use their iPad to tell their story. They want to take that on the road to educate their peers across the state and country. Need to educate people supported (how can it be normalized and take away the specialization of the iPad/tablets).
- We created a core of self-advocates on supportive technology.
- How Core uses its technology to help people live their lives is innovative.
- Core Services has a lot of innovative approaches to how they provide services. They are person-centered—one of the first providers that require all staff to go through PCT training. That helps expand those plans to use new ideas.
- Helping people understand what technology is out there by bringing it to them
- Another initiative is medication administration. We are using medication dispensers that are sophisticated. These can dispense the correct meds at the correct time. Forty percent of people receiving services have begun using those devices to rely less on staff. We found that these also helped reduce medication variances (errors).
- Time alone conversations—there is always a resounding "yes" when people are asked if they would like to have time alone. We have worked to reduce the use of paid staff (time/hours). Eight people have significantly reduced reliance on staff.
- We created the position of remote support specialist. They monitor the various homes and take phone calls and assist when someone needs help. This has provided advancement opportunities for DSPs.
- Innovation is not about enabling technology. Innovation of trying to get people out safely during a pandemic (risk vs. benefit)—the dignity of risk
- Core has been a mentor to other provider agencies who are interested in the same type of services.

- What we see at Core and the impact on people—they really are a convergence of person-centeredness and innovation.

Additional thoughts/comments:

- Some people could be using the iPad for more things.
- Motivation and follow-up are important to utilize the technology.
- I wish we had ten Core Services agencies.
- Their energy is infectious. You can see it among the team. They are excited about the ideas they have to support people and what these supports may yield for people. They wear many hats. There is a lot of excitement about what they do.
- This team at Core Services is full of energy, innovation, and they are entertaining.
- We never hear the word “no” from Core Services.

PERSONAL OUTCOME MEASURES®

Personal Outcome Measures® focuses on the choices people have in their lives and serve as a powerful tool for evaluating the quality of life for people. The *Personal Outcome Measures®* enable us to learn about people in new and different ways and can also provide a guide for person-centered planning. In order to achieve Person-Centered Excellence accreditation with CQL, organizations must (1) begin utilizing the *Personal Outcome Measures®* on an individual level for planning and discovery, and (2) collect, aggregate, analyze, and act on data gathered as a result of *Personal Outcome Measures®* implementation.

CQL did not conduct any *Personal Outcome Measures®* interviews during this virtual visit. Instead, a discussion was held between CQL and the organization on its systems and practice for the use of *Personal Outcome Measures®*.

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee has one CQL certified *Personal Outcome Measures®* trainer and is looking to add three additional CQL certified *Personal Outcome Measures®* interviewers in 2021. *Personal Outcome Measures®* interviews are completed annually for everyone supported. This is typically completed 90 days prior to annual planning. In addition, facilitated person-centered planning meetings are often held for life events that come up, such as a move, a housemate change, a change in support, a vacation, or a significant finding of the *Personal Outcome Measures®* interview that warrants further exploration.

For Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, there is much motivation behind the process: The organization considers the "system-defined" annual planning process a flawed process. This is for several reasons, including that the annual ISP discussion rarely involves getting to the dreams and desires of the person's desired life. By completing the *Personal Outcome Measures®* and or facilitated Person-Centered Planning meeting before the "annual planning meeting," the organization can listen to the person without distraction and capture their dreams and desires. The information learned during the *Personal Outcome Measures®* interview is shared at the annual planning meeting with the expectation that it is added to the plan.

The organization sees the *Personal Outcome Measures*® as a great educational tool for people as well as DSPs. The organization stated:

“When conducting a POM interview and follow-up, you get many “aha” moments. Staff and family begin realizing they should be asking more questions, providing more options, opportunities for exploration, as well as providing more education. In addition, the person-centered language we have learned from looking at these factors have become part of our daily conversations when talking to the people we support and their families. It is an educational tool for DSPs as well in moving them away from a services model to a support model as is a desired outcome of our agency.”

The organization uses its aggregate data to see what it is doing well, what change ideas seem to be working, and what it needs to work on to provide the best support possible. The organization feels that it is evident when an outcome is missing from the lives of most people interviewed; it is an indicator of something not working in organizational supports. The organization trends the POM data to identify opportunities for change before they become areas of risk. These opportunities are added to the agency Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP is a constantly evolving plan of action, responsive to input, new data, and ideas. Some examples include:

- 2020 POM data in the area of *people are free from abuse and neglect* revealed the outcome absent for 18.42% of people. A recurring theme was that people did not know what constituted exploitation.
- The 2020 QIP action plan included plans to support people in controlling their money because it was felt that if people are controlling their money, and have more time without paid supports, they would be more susceptible to exploitation if they did not know what it looked like.

Opportunities:

1. Continue to look at the *Personal Outcome Measures*® data in diverse ways, such as age, gender, service type, conservator status, employment status, etc. This data can then be compared to the overall data to see areas of strength and/or opportunity.
2. When using *Personal Outcome Measures*® data as a metric for organizational goals, use the supports measure and not the outcome measure as the person owns the outcome and the organization has more “control” over the supports that are implemented.
3. As the organization increases its number of certified interviews, consider looking at the data by each interviewer to see if there are any educational opportunities amongst the interviewers and to enhance inter-rater reliability within the organization.

4. Provide opportunities for organizational stakeholders beyond staff to participate in the four-day *Personal Outcome Measures*® workshop. This could include people receiving services, family members, board members, employers, etc.

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee has met these requirements as demonstrated by:

- Dedication to the use of the *Personal Outcome Measures*® through ongoing training, interviewing, and use of the information gleaned in providing quality supports for people in the way they desire.
- Core Services of Northeast Tennessee, at its core, believes that this tool is a great tool to help evaluate if people are living their best life.

PERSON-CENTERED EXCELLENCE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The CQL Accreditation Team met with stakeholders brought together by Core Services of Northeast Tennessee. This group was made up of approximately 37 stakeholders and included people receiving supports, direct support professionals, the organization's leadership team, community members, a member of the organization's board of directors, and Tennessee DIDD staff. This group participated in an intensive process to discover, dream, and design a plan focused on enhancing organizational implementation Person-Centered Excellence over the course of the four-year accreditation term. An Appreciative Inquiry approach was used by concentrating on what the organization does best and capitalizing on those strengths.

This data, in conjunction with the results from the *Basic Assurances*® and Shared Values assessments, *Personal Outcome Measures*® data, and group discussion, contributed to the selection of priorities and action plans developed by this group.

The three priority areas selected by the large group include:

1. Factor Four – Community Connection
2. Factor Five - Workforce
3. Factor Seven – Quality and Accountability

These priority areas and planning around them form organizational accountabilities for accreditation. At the conclusion of the virtual consultation visit, CQL Accreditation is awarded based on the organization's commitment to implement its action plan and maintained based on the organization following through with the plan's implementation.

Find the full plan attached to this report.

The organization was organized and prepared to facilitate much of the learning portion of the Stakeholder's Day. It was clear through listening to the organization present about what the Shared Values, Basic Assurances®, Community Life®, and Personal Outcome Measures® are that they have a clear understanding of the purpose of partnering with CQL. DSPs, people receiving services, staff from other organizations, staff from the state of Tennessee, community members, and families were all encouraged to participate, and the organization was very transparent throughout the process and used appreciative inquiry to build solid Person-Centered Excellence plans that incorporated information from Shared Values, Basic Assurances®, Community Life®, and Personal Outcome Measures®. In addition to working together in person, the organization included people virtually via Zoom in the day's activities and did so seamlessly.

NEXT STEPS/ ONGOING ACCREDITATION

Core Services of Northeast Tennessee is commended and congratulated for achieving accreditation with CQL's Person-Centered Excellence *with Distinction* Accreditation methodology, as determined by a CQL panel that met on February 3, 2021, and for its ongoing commitment and efforts to exemplify how a singular focus on the lives of people supported leads to making meaningful discoveries about *What Really Matters*.

Basic Assurances® Plan

In order to maintain CQL Accreditation, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee must submit a plan within 30 days of the virtual accreditation (due March 1, 2021) to align all *Basic Assurances®* indicators for both system and practice. Any *Basic Assurances®* indicators assessed as NOT PRESENT in either system or practice by CQL requires a plan of alignment. Provided to the organization is a template for this plan.

An assessment of the implementation of this plan will occur during the next accreditation checkpoint with CQL. Failure to complete, submit or make substantial progress on the plan will jeopardize accreditation.

Personal Outcome Measures® Plan

In order to maintain CQL PCE-D Accreditation, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee must follow their plan to:

- Maintain reliable interviewers throughout the accreditation term.
- Provide a minimum annual representative sample of 10% of the total agency size, or 200 POM interviews (whichever number is lower and which may be negotiated) and include in the CQL Database (PORTAL) which must be performed by a CQL certified interviewer (both information gathering and decision making).

- Continue to use POMs for personal and agency planning by collecting, aggregating, analyzing, and acting on POM data.

In order to maintain CQL Accreditation, Core Services of Northeast Tennessee agrees to participate in two additional visits with CQL over the course of the four-year accreditation partnership.

Since this review was conducted virtually, CQL will be on-site for Visit Two for at least one day, but no more than three. During this visit, we will conduct visits to where people live and work, additional small focus groups, receive an update from your plans, and any other work the lead QES deems necessary. Please also note that while we may have determined that an indicator was present during the virtual visits, this may change during the on-site visit, and additional plans will need to be submitted.

The next checkpoint with CQL will occur 12-18 months after the initial virtual visit and will focus on:

- Implementation of *Basic Assurances*[®] plans of alignment (if applicable)
- Progress attained in the Person-Centered Excellence short-term plan developed by the organization
- Stories that illustrate progress and success in people's lives
- *Personal Outcome Measures*[®] data analysis and learning
- *Basic Assurances*[®] Factor Ten Updates (Integrated Quality Management)
- Ongoing compliance with local and national regulations and requirements concerning the basics of health, safety, and human security

The second checkpoint with CQL will occur 36 months after the initial virtual visit and will focus on:

- Progress attained in the Person-Centered Excellence long-term plan developed by the organization
- Technical assistance support/resources on a particular challenge for the agency
- Stories that illustrate progress and success in people's lives
- *Personal Outcome Measures*[®] data analysis and learning
- Implementation of *Basic Assurances*[®] plans of alignment (if applicable)
- *Basic Assurances*[®] Factor Ten Updates (Integrated Quality Management)
- Ongoing compliance with local and national regulations and requirements concerning the basics of health, safety, and human security

CQL reserves the right to require an additional visit if progress cannot be validated.

NEXT STEPS/ ONGOING ACCREDITATION

Accredited organizations are required to notify CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership of changes in the following circumstances and any other event that could potentially put at risk the quality of supports to people:

- Change in the executive director/chief executive officer
- Change in ownership or management
- The potential loss of certification, license(s), or funding
- Receipt of citations of Immediate Jeopardy
- Receipt of any state-specific sanctions related to state licensure regulations
- Addition or deletion of program/service components
- Any changes in the compliance of any building with the requirements of the Life Safety Code or other equivalent code
- Relocation of people receiving services due to fire, flood, or other natural or humanmade disaster, or significant maintenance issues requiring people to re-locate in excess of 14 calendar days
- Merger or acquisition of another organization in whole or in part
- Criminal charges or conviction of executive leadership including, but not limited to the executive director, chief executive officer, chief financial officer, or their equivalents, and/or board of directors' officers
- Negative publicity regarding the agency or its leadership (board of directors or executive leadership)

Upon notification of such changes, CQL will request additional information that provides evidence of the impact of the change(s) on people receiving services. CQL reserves the option to make an on-site visit to any accredited organization, at the expense of the organization, if CQL determines that the:

- Change(s) significantly or negatively impacts people receiving services.
- The information does not sufficiently address the impact.
- The organization failed to notify CQL of significant change(s).

CQL will give notice of any such visit/review to the organization's chief executive officer/executive director. The on-site visit will be to determine the impact of organizational change(s) on people receiving services.

CQL reserves the right to discontinue the award of accreditation if the on-site visit results in evidence that determines:

- The impact of organizational change has had a significant and negative effect on people receiving services.
- The organization is no longer able to sustain the commitment to supporting basic health, safety, and human security for people over the cycle of accreditation.
- The organization refuses to undergo an on-site visit.
- The organization does not maintain PCE-D standards.

STATEMENT & SIGNATURES

We, the undersigned, have read the above Executive Summary/Accreditation Report and Accreditation Policies. Core Services of Northeast Tennessee and CQL |The Council on Quality and Leadership, understand and agree to its contents and Core Services of Northeast Tennessee and CQL |The Council on Quality and Leadership hereby agree to the expectations and accountabilities outlined and detailed herein.

For: Core Services of Northeast Tennessee

Susan Arwood

Susan Arwood, Executive Director

4/14/2021

Date

For: CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership

Katherine Dunbar

Katherine Dunbar, Vice President of Accreditation

April 14, 2021

Date