

**County** Buncombe County Health & Human Services  
**Department of Social Services**

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**Project Title** Buncombe County Curriculum Map

**Category** Advancement in Staff and Leadership Development  
(Please select one)

### **Project Description and Summary**

**What did you do?**

**Describe your program or project. What did you do? What is the history behind the program/project? What did you hope to accomplish? What was your timeline? Your budget? How did you identify your objectives? How well did you use available resources?**

Over the last four years, the Economic Service Division of Buncombe County Health & Human Services developed a training plan that is always evolving and adapting based on the needs of our staff and agency. In 2016, we restructured the Staff Development Specialists team and the way training and staff development are delivered. We created a model that allows the department to utilize the strengths of individuals why maintaining consistency in materials and benchmarks. Supervisors and

the Staff Development Specialists work together to train new staff, which allows for individual staff members to get a wraparound approach to learning the intricacies of Income Maintenance work.

The Economic Service Division recognized the need for aligning the development of staff with Human Resource onboarding and state defined timeframes regarding career status. Because there is not, to date, a statewide alignment of training for Income Maintenance workers, the Staff Development Specialists were tasked with reviewing program and staff needs and to lay out a blueprint of training that would consider:

- Buncombe County Human Resource onboarding of New Employees at 30, 60, and 90 day timeframes;
- NC OSHR policy regarding Types of Appointments and Types of Career Status for new employees as well as employees transferring from other counties;
- Buncombe County staffing needs and caseloads;
- State and Federal mandates regarding timeliness and accuracy benchmarks for program administration; and
- Feedback from staff of all levels regarding their needs and desires for growth and development in program, technical, and customer service areas.

In conjunction with Economic Service leadership (Supervisors, Division Heads, and Program Administrators), the Staff Development Specialists Team created Curriculum Maps for Food and Nutrition Services, Family and Children's Medicaid, Private Living Arrangement Medicaid, and Work First Family Assistance. The Economic Service Curriculum Maps project started in late August 2016 and programs were prioritized and implemented based on agency need. The first map released was in response to hiring new Adult Medicaid staff that started September 12, 2016. The Staff Development Specialists Team at that time consisted of 3 full time staff who started on the restructured team August 21, 2016. They were able to complete the first maps prior to meeting with the assigned supervisors on September 6, 2016.

Curriculum Maps break down the first 6 months of any employee new to Buncombe County HHS, regardless of previous experience, and provides the employee, supervisor, and leadership a road map for what should

happen for the new staff member and when it should occur. Training materials were developed and grouped into modules consistently across all of the programs to include:

- Module 1 – New Employee Orientation and Policy Basics
- Module 2 – Policy Overviews
- Module 3 – Applications
- Module 4 – Reviews
- Module 5 – Changes, Appeals, and Hearings

Each module aligns with materials and activities available to the staff and supervisor to be utilized at the pace needed. These modules contain pre-work, training materials, knowledge checks, resources, and check off documents for the supervisor and staff person to gauge success.

Additionally, all materials are available to all staff at any point within our knowledge center Training Catalog. This allows any staff member, new or historical, to move at their own pace without having to wait for someone to deliver materials.

The maps include a start date and mark the following benchmarks:

- Estimated start and end date for each module
- When the supervisor should put the worker on “rotation” to receive work based on progress
- All onboarding dates per Buncombe County HHS Human Resources
- When the worker should be put on face to face intake
- When Quality Assurance benchmarks should be met.

While the maps initially were created for new employees, the Staff Development Specialist Team has made them consistent so that a struggling staff person could work with a supervisor to determine what their needs are and to implement the Curriculum Map as a tool to help the staff member get back on track with quality and timeliness. We have also designed them to have the flexibility for each programs need based on applications versus reviews based on the ebb and flow of workflow design.

As we developed the Curriculum Maps, we were able to utilize resources already available including the Learning Gateway, Moodle, staff, and materials already developed and updated. Current maps were developed from:

1. Former training modules and the times allotted via the training calendars previously delivered.

2. Direct feedback from the supervisors who had new staff to train between January – August 2016 when there was no Staff Development team. We set time with each of those supervisors to discuss:
- a. What kind of experience they had in the shifting of the relationship;
  - b. What materials they were using;
  - c. How much experience the person had and what, if any, affect that had on the way they trained them and the timeframes;
  - d. How long it took them to train their specific new person to a level they felt was successful when they reviewed that worker's cases;
  - e. What worked well for them; and
  - f. What did not work well for them

We also asked them to share with us materials they had used and we talked with the new caseworkers directly about their experiences asking them similar questions.

3. Human Resource benchmarks for onboarding new staff which allowed us to make a concerted effort to ensure that there was something available to the supervisor to assist in evaluating the worker at 30, 60, 90 and 180 days per our policies. The original timeframe we had was more than 6 months, but it was scaled back in an attempt to reconcile probation periods, career status issues for transferring in caseworkers from other counties, and to have some consistency in the maps. We worked backwards from 180 days and plotted the HR timeframes and then plotted 5 business days inside that benchmark (best we could) to ensure that there was frequent oversight and development of the caseworker and the training relationship.

By utilizing available and free resources, the costs associated with this project were essentially time related. The Staff Development Specialists team used the forecasted timeframes for hiring new staff based on attrition to prioritize and develop the curriculum map, materials, and resources needed. They were then able to meet directly with supervisor of new or struggling staff as well as Senior Leadership to lay out the map for the staff member at least one to two weeks prior to a start date. This allowed the Staff Development Specialists to further the support role and develop partnership with the supervisor by answering questions and adjusting based on any last minute needs.

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## **Project Success and Impact**

### **What was the outcome?**

**Was your program/project a success? What was the impact? How did you measure the impact? How widespread is the impact of your program/project? How were you able to overcome obstacles and challenges? Did your program/project meet your established objectives?**

Objectives and outcomes were developed based on the above mentioned considerations taken into account. A caseworker not completing the map in the timeframes established is not a definitive statement of their ability to do quality work in a timely manner. The maps are specifically designed to be a roadmap of sorts so that everyone is on the same page regarding progression. It allows the supervisor and caseworker opportunities to assess retention of both knowledge and skill via knowledge checks and prescribed Quality Assurance on actual work given. The expected outcome and progressions is that the new caseworker is hitting a minimum of 80% retention at any given point on the map. The supervisor plays a role in the process by also checking actual work pre-disposition to ensure no interruption or issue with client benefits. If the worker is not meeting the threshold, the supervisor is able to readily identify the issue and address it early by putting in extra supports or working with Staff Development Specialists to retrain as needed. If the threshold is consistently not met, then the caseworker may not be a good fit for the position and is identified within their probationary period. As the worker nears their probationary period ending, they are expected to be functioning at the State and Federal tolerance levels for quality and timeliness.

To date, the Buncombe County Economic Service Division has had 19 new employees utilize the Curriculum Maps. We have had one supervisor be placed on a Curriculum Map to enhance policy knowledge. In a review of quality, 14 of the 19 new employees have had sufficient numbers of Quality Assurance to gauge accuracy and success of the Curriculum Maps. There are 5 new employees, who started in May 2017, currently progressing through Curriculum Maps and are currently processing applications while beginning Module 4 for reviews. The accuracy results for the 14 new staff who have completed Curriculum maps (less than one year on the job) are as follows:

- New staff utilizing the Curriculum Maps have given the correct benefit
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100% of the time to clients within prescribed timeframes and guidelines by program.

- New staff have been able to complete cases cleanly, with no administrative errors 97% of the time. This threshold meets the standards prescribed for each of the programs involved.

In reviewing their quality, those staff who have been here less than one year are performing as well if not better than their counterparts in the Division holding the same role. While the Curriculum Maps are almost one year in the making, we are continuing to improve them by adding enhancements such as automation and more visual cues for users. We have utilized them as the foundation for expanding other tools and resources for our staff as well. Everything the Staff Development Specialists team does is now intertwined with a module. This ensures that our historical, more experienced staff have the same training material available to them as the new staff. We have supervisors utilize the Curriculum Map to hone in on one specific area a struggling caseworker needs improvement upon based on their quality. They are able to not only access the materials in an orderly fashion, but also have a timeframe for how long it should take a struggling worker to improve. It allows the struggling caseworker to know the same. Supervisors are able to pull materials from the modules to utilize with their individual teams based on their team's needs.

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