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PLAN

Identify an opportunity and plan for improvement.

Area for Improvement (Why focus on this area?)

Presumptive Disability (PD) determinations get provisional Title XVI/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits to claimants faster, pending a final decision. A PD decision is made when there is a high likelihood of allowance, once all of the necessary documentation is received. The Vermont DDS wants to increase the number of accurate PD decisions in order to help the most vulnerable Vermonters.

Target Goal

Increase the number of accurate PD decisions to 60% of all initial SSI allowances by increasing the number of good PDs, thus dropping the reversal rate to 10% or less by November 30, 2012.

Baseline Data

In April 2012, the PD rate in the Vermont DDS was 50.5%, while the reversal rate was 15.4%.

What change ideas (theories) did you have before you started testing changes?

Change ideas included, case reviews, adjudicator self-report and monitoring, mentor and supervisor reviews, system-generated reminders, creation of common PD profiles and additional staff training.

DO

What ideas for improvement did you test?

We went through four PDSA cycles during the process.

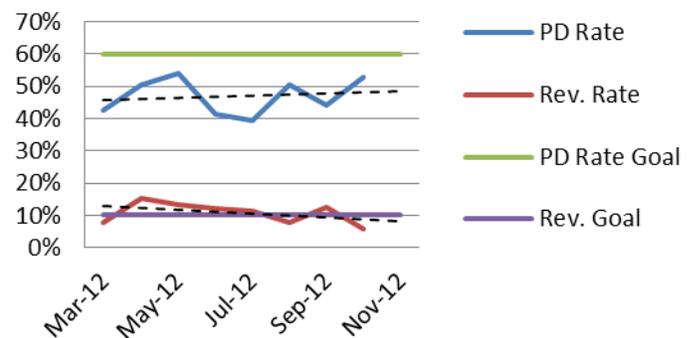
1. Mentors and supervisors reviewed Title XVI/SSI cases without PD decisions in the caseloads of less experienced adjudicators
2. Adjudicators reviewed a number of Title XVI/SSI cases without PD decisions in their caseloads and reported back to supervisors on the results
3. Creation and posting of a colorful "THINK PD" sign on workstations and in strategic, visible locations
4. Creation and distribution of a "PD Profiles" desk guide for adjudicators

STUDY

What were the results of your test(s)? What is your final post-change data compared to the baseline data?

After completion of the PDSA cycles, there was some overall improvement in the number of accurate PD decisions made.

PD Rates



ACT

What lessons did you learn from the process? How will this change be sustained?

The trend in the chart above shows steady, overall improvement since the project began. By the end of October 2012, the PD rate improved to 53% and the reversal rate dropped to 5.7%, which indicated that the PD decisions were more accurate.

While the trend is positive, we learned that additional work needs to be done to reach our goals and sustain the improvement.

Since PDSA cycle #2 yielded the best results, we have reinstated it as part of our normal business process for adjudicators. We found that focused case reviews were the most effective means of improving the PD rate and accuracy. We have also encouraged the use of the "PD Profiles" desk guide to improve accuracy. This guide provides the adjudicator with profiles of claimants who have a high likelihood of eventually being found disabled.

We will continue to refine our business process and provide additional training as needed. This is an ongoing improvement process.