Provider Behavior Change Implementation Kit

Documentation Worksheet

Purpose – to help you effectively leverage existing documents as data sources

When working with existing documentation or records, remember that it's likely the data was gathered for a different purpose than the one you will use it for. In order to ensure you are capturing the data from the existing source in a useful way, you will actually need review the records or documentation to get the answers you are looking for. That is, pull just the answer to your question from each record and capture that answer in a central location along with data from all other records that were reviewed.

Sample when necessary. In the same way that you would sample a large group of human responders to limit cost, you may need to sample from large bodies of documentation too, rather than spend the time and resources to review every document available. The same sampling techniques and best practices apply.

Data capture. Records or documentation review needs as much time and attention as any other form of data collection in order to be effective. Here are the primary steps and considerations:

1. Develop and pilot a protocol—in order to gather the data you need from whatever format it is currently in, you will need to create a guide for reviewers on how to find what is needed. For example, if patient records are a source of data for your needs analysis, the person who will look at dozens—or hundreds!—of records needs clear direction on exactly what to look for, where to find it in each record, and how to capture what is found for later analysis.
2. Develop and pilot a capture instrument—because you want to gather the information across many documents or existing sources into a single location for analysis, you need to provide an instrument to capture it. Typically, document reviewers identify needed information from existing sources and note it on a computer spreadsheet. A well-constructed spreadsheet or capture document is essential to speed this work along. For example, if the data of interest is the variety of services delivered to patients as noted in patient records, creating a drop down list of all the possible services they may have received will allow a quick notation on the spreadsheet for each record reviewed before moving on to the next one.
3. Train reviewers—if at all possible, use actual examples of the documents to be reviewed when training your reviewers. Choose examples that illustrate the full range of document types or possible content. Show reviewers how you expect information to be captured for each type of data noted, and what to do if data is missing, incomplete, or does not fit the expected categories. Time individuals as they reach competency so you can estimate the total amount of time needed to review the sample or total number of available documents.

Tips:

- Document and records review is sometimes a tedious process, so be sure to encourage your data reviewers to take frequent breaks.
- If at all possible, capture the data in electronic format as it is easier to manage and analyze. Be sure to back up all files to ensure the work is not lost if a given piece of equipment breaks down.