



Being...Becoming...Belonging:

BACI's Commitment to Quality of Life for all

Quality Assurance Review
Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion
2013

Welcome!

In the spring of 2012, we at the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion (BACI) began a process of renewing our Quality Assurance system. At the heart of this process was a desire to explore what quality meant and to improve our accountability to the individuals and families we serve. We wanted to be sure we were listening to the voices of those we support, their family members, our Board of Directors, and our staff as we considered where we are as an organization now and where we want to be in the future.

To help us with this work, we asked Kim Lyster and Warren Helfrich from WRH Consulting, to design and proceed with a review of our quality assurance system as well as other aspects of our organization.. Kim and Warren have a background in evaluation and quality assurance and are knowledgeable about community living services. The review was funded, in part, by Community Living BC as part of their Quality of Life project.

The results of the review were submitted to BACI in a very detailed report. We also hosted some meetings to help tell the story of the project and its outcomes. We felt that a shorter version of the report would be helpful for many readers and so have produced this version that tells the story of this very valuable and important work, our discoveries, and what lies ahead for BACI.

Our Purpose

A bit about our history...

BACI was founded in 1956 by a group of parents. As with other similar groups of parents at that time, they were responding to the lack of community based services for persons with disabilities. As a result, they created a grassroots, non-profit organization, provided support to one another, and advocated for the rights and needs of their sons and daughters. From those early days, BACI has certainly grown!

BACI has maintained a commitment to advocacy and person-centred services across the life span of the people it serves for the past 37 years. BACI currently serves over 1,000 individuals and their families in the Metro Vancouver area and provides a variety of training, development, social and recreational opportunities. BACI is governed by a Board of Directors and has successfully built partnerships with business, community leaders and others.

At BACI, we believe that every person with developmental disabilities is a unique individual. We seek to honour this belief by supporting the people we serve to live fulfilled and valued lives as members of their community. BACI works hard to make sure that the services and supports we offer are creative and innovative, focus on celebrating individuals' abilities, and respond to the changing needs, interests and dreams of people throughout their lives.

BACI is committed to being a learning organization. We conduct on-going self evaluation to make sure that the quality of our services is regularly examined and improved. The review was part of fulfilling that commitment.

We hoped to answer four important questions through the course of our review:

- What is the relationship between accreditation, personal planning processes and quality of life?
- How can we make sure that our quality assurance activities lead to a better quality of life for those we serve?
- Are the people we serve able to achieve a sense of belonging...a good life?
- Are we making a difference by the work and service we offer?

Our Process

At BACI, we have clear statements that define our vision, mission and values. We have always tried to make the focus of our support and work in the community about what is best for the people we serve and, in particular, toward creating a society that includes everyone.

We are also committed to making sure that how we provide services and supports reflect best practices, and so we created a quality assurance system starting in the mid 1990's. It was developed over time and focused on creating a cohesive link between our individual planning process, our indicators of quality service, agency policies and procedures, and how we hire and evaluate our staff. Over the years, the system has been changed and adapted as we learned or as outside influences required shifts. We felt that it was time to revisit our whole quality assurance system to ensure that it continued to provide the information we need to ensure that high quality services were consistently being delivered to those we serve.

The reviewers divided the project into phases. The first phase focused on data gathering. It included a series of focus groups, interviews, an online survey everyone could access, and a review of our quality assurance system in the form of documents, reports, and forms.

The focus groups were especially important. They were held in November and December of 2012. A series of questions were developed by Kim and Warren and reviewed by us. Nine focus groups were held and 252 people participated in them. Different groups were held for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families and/or caregivers, staff, management, and the Board of Directors. Where needed, individuals were supported to attend and participate in the focus groups,. Each of the sessions was recorded by Kim and Warren and all of the things that people said were written down to help create the final report.

The sessions were tailored to each of the different groups. Although the groups were different and the questions varied in their style, the key themes were the same throughout.

These themes were:

- What makes a good life?
- What do quality services look like?
- How helpful is the planning process to achieving a good life?

Kim and Warren also held in-depth interviews with several people at BACI as well as friends of our organization who had helpful ideas and history to offer. These conversations were important to learning about what we we're doing well and where we might look to make changes. For people who could not attend the focus groups, an on-line survey was available which people could access to provide more input.

Kim and Warren also looked at all our forms and the process we use for personal planning, different documents that we use to monitor services, reports that we generate, and other parts of our quality assurance system. By looking at these pieces of the quality assurance system, along with all of the focus groups and interviews, Warren and Kim were able to gather a lot of information. Throughout the experience, we were reminded of how important hosting these kinds of conversations is to encouraging and respecting the voices of everyone who is part of the BACI community. There were several important discoveries.

Our Discoveries

We realized that often for people with developmental disabilities, describing what defines a good life and what quality services look like overlap considerably. This is because paid services and supports continue to be a dominant feature of their lives and those of their families and caregivers. That is part of the reason that we have always hoped that by offering quality services, we can put in place the building blocks to support people having good lives.

We were also reminded that each person will base their opinion about how they feel about their quality of life on the amount of experience and support they have had to reflect on this. We know that for many people with developmental disabilities, it will take a lot of support and deep and genuine listening on our part to truly understand what is important to them. Supporting people we care about to talk about how they feel about their lives means that we have to actively create safe spaces to talk, listen carefully, and help build confidence and capacity for self advocacy.

What we learned about a good life...

With all of the information that was gathered from people, Kim and Warren looked for patterns and common ideas in what people said. Three broad categories or themes emerged and proved to be consistent across all the different groups they talked to.

They grouped these themes as:

- **Being:** including basis needs and day to day supports to meet those needs like housing, food, safety, health, personal care ~ helpful supports that look after our **being**.
- **Becoming:** how we connect in the world such as volunteering, work, going to school, having and spending money, attending community events, having fun ~ ways that support us as we **become** people who contribute and are active, visible and valued members of society.
- **Belonging:** all the relationships that give meaning and connection in our lives including family, friends, spouses, and pets. This also includes the opportunity to give and receive love and affection as part of our human desire to confirm we **belong**.

We know that each of these three themes is connected and that they represent different parts of our lives which may be more or less important to each of us at different times. Throughout all of the focus groups, people told us that feeling fulfilled in each of these areas, was important to having a good life.

The chart below provides a summary of how each of these parts of a good life was described by the different groups we talked to. The feedback from individuals is listed first. When Kim and Warren looked at all of the information they had gathered, they saw that family members and staff were agreeing with what the people we serve were saying. The feedback from families and staff was helpful and added even more depth to the conversation.

A Good Life (BACI)			
Being	Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Safety • Accessibility • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Listened To • Staff Support • Independence
	Family Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Security • Stability • Aging In Their Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Esteem • Self determination • Respect, privacy
	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to Communicate • Flexible Supports • Choices and hopes fulfilled and valued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being known and valued by staff • Trust
Becoming	Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking and having work • Contribution • Purposeful life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money • Opportunities to learn • Fun
	Family Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accomplishments • Goals and Dreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacations • Freedom
	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for Exploration • Happiness • Citizenship • Achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to express individual gifts • Independence and control • Successes

Belonging	Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of community • Rich relationships that encompass family, friends, romance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who care • Pets • A sense of belonging
	Family Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being known • Love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment • Celebrating culture and religion
	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valued • Circle of Support- a network • Communion with others • Intimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romance • Sex • Personal history is honoured

What we learned about quality services...

The feedback from people we support about what defines quality services were closely connected to how they described a good life. This connection really reinforced the overlap between what services people receive, the activities they engage in, and how they come to their ideas about what makes life good. The table below is a summary of their feedback which was still very much centred around the themes of being, becoming and belonging.

Quality Services from the perspective of Individuals (BACI)		
Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home • Meeting my basic needs • Being supported • Provide access • Keeping my stuff safe • Being Listened To 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being empowered • Being encouraged • Earning my trust • Feeling safe • Having practical assistance
Becoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities • Contribution • Getting a job/having work • Opportunities to learn • Getting started • Volunteer opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping me dream • Taking me out • Taking me to dances • Solving problems • Having fun, celebrating

Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being known • Having friends • Being with my family • Having pets • Meeting people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to new places • Helping me to be involved in things • Being out and part of the community • Helping me with work
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Families and staff members thought about quality services differently. For them quality services were a blend of two important ingredients: 1) the values of staff and how this influenced their support to people, and; 2) the actual service provided that might increase the likelihood of people experiencing a good life. This helped remind us that good quality services and can contribute to a good life but we cannot assume they are one in the same.

The table below describes what families told us about quality services.

Quality Services: families (BACI)		
The ways of being with people (i.e., “How Service was delivered”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating • Allowing time to adjust • Continually improving – learning from mistakes • Deep listening • Caring • Enjoyable, wonderful conversations occur • Comfortable, welcoming • Informative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open communication • Respectful • Trustworthy • Sincere • Understanding • Very responsive • Supportive • Individualized • Pro-active
The nature or style of services (i.e., “what is delivered or done”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for essential needs: good nutrition, help with medical care, emergency response, access to therapy, help with legal issues, recreational activities • Support for aging • Choices • Life long 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer emotional and physical support • Provide a home • Provide a place to go • Employ competent staff • Provide advocacy • Offer safety, sense of security • Provide follow-up • Support independence

Our staff, including the managers, added even more information about quality services which is described below:

Quality Services: staff and managers (BACI)		
	Staff	Managers
The ways of being with people (i.e., “How Service was delivered”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using intuition • Employ trial and error • Strategic intentionality in actions • Observing • Employ a networking lens • Honesty • Being creative • Being open-minded • Being persistent/resilient • Respectful • Relationship-based • Believe in people • Care and concern • Building trust and rapport • Expressing emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming • Offer community and are a part of community • Passionate • Dependable • Encourage hard conversations • Act as connectors
The nature or style of services (i.e., “what is delivered or done”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking what people want • Mediating/intervening with families • Knowing a person’s story • Knowing about resources • Advocacy • Flexible work schedules • Professional development for staff • Assessing abilities, celebrating gifts, capacity and achievements • Building skills • Bridging with community • Choice • Education • Resources that provide access • Resource development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide employment for people and help find jobs • Educate families • Promote relationships • Planning process engaged people

This information was very important for us to hear. It reminds us that the role of our staff, how they are trained, and what they understand their job to be is critical to whether or not the support that is offered can help people experience the life choices they want and need. It will be very important for us to evaluate whether or not what is offered equals what was wanted by those we serve; if the right things are happening at the right times.

What we learned about our planning process...

At BACI, we assist people to have a good life through using a person centred planning process. Warren and Kim wanted to find out how people felt about planning, and in particular, what they valued and what they thought should change. Two themes emerged: 1) the values which inform the planning process, and; 2) how the planning is done. We heard that our staff must understand the purpose of planning and commit to the process. We learned about values which families and staff feel are essential as well as the characteristics of the planning process which are likely to create benefits for people.

The focus groups were also asked for advice about what we need to do to improve. Family members placed a lot of importance on how we communicate with them. They felt that we needed to provide more frequent opportunities to talk. The individuals we serve felt the same way and told us again and again that they wanted more opportunities to get together to talk about the things that matter to them.

We received many helpful ideas about how to improve our communication and ways to make the planning process better. Our staff offered helpful suggestions as well. They told us they need help to understand how to plan well, more support to build their skills and confidence, and a clearer sense of how to assist people to talk about their dreams, wishes, and needs. We realized that our planning process, without us intending to, had become less about the person's goals and sometimes more about making sure it was done. We were reminded that we must always place those we support at the centre of our work.

When Warren and Kim looked at some of our documents and reports, they also had great ideas about ways we could change them to be more helpful and easier to use.

Our Next Steps...the way ahead

This review gave us a chance to stop, listen, and think about who we are as an organization, how we want to support people and their families, and what our values are. We have much to be proud of in our long history and a bright future ahead. We have taken the three powerful ideas of **being, becoming and belonging** and woven them into our next steps.



We will support people with developmental disabilities from Greater Vancouver to live a 'good life', from birth to death. We will seek to increase belonging through advocacy, community development, and service delivery.

Our strategies for achieving this impact will be to:

- Provide person/family centred services and practices of the highest quality
- To have our staff trained, supported and encouraged to provide meaningful, creative and flexible individualized supports
- To draw upon existing community strengths to build stronger, more sustainable communities for the future
- To generate new ideas, and support continual learning throughout BACI
- To advance 'disability confidence' and support the broader community to welcome and support access
- To support and develop personal networks and community connections for those we support.

Tell us what you think!

Just as our process for this review was designed to include the voices of those we support, their families, our Board of Directors, staff and friends of BACI, we hope you will tell us what you think about our discoveries and plans for the future.

BACI has been working to help build a society that welcomes the abilities, gifts, and contributions of all citizens for over 55 years. As we look ahead and move forward on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and their families, it is vital that your voices help shape our future.

Please let us know your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you!