Cultural Change Management Plan

Definition and Purpose

Change management is a disciplined approach with procedures and diagnostic tools designed to:

- Increase the acceptance of change
- Create an environment conducive to accepting change
- Measure the level of organizational support for or resistance to change
- Decrease the barriers to change
- Engage staff in the change process
- Promote the benefits of change

The implementation of ASSIST will change the manner in which many social services employees perform their jobs. Most of these changes will be positive, particularly as workers gain more time to spend with their clients. However, even in the best-planned and executed projects, people resist change. To meet this challenge, Alabama will utilize a Cultural Change Management Plan to garner user support and promote the success of ASSIST. Utilizing change management helps ensure users are informed about ASSIST and how it affects them *before* implementation.

The objective of change management is to prepare ASSIST users to fully benefit from the implementation of the system and to minimize the disruption to the delivery of services to the clients. To accomplish this goal, change management must communicate clearly the nature of the changes in business processes associated with ASSIST and prepare the users to take full advantage of the functionality of the system.

Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Change Management Plan

1. Executive Sponsorship

One of the single greatest factors that will determine the success of the change management process is the extent to which agency leadership understands ASSIST and effectively embraces and supports it. This requires that members of management promote the benefits of ASSIST and ensure that DHR understands that changes will be accompanied by some level of discomfort and reduced productivity.

2. Resources

The change management process requires allocation of resources needed to implement the plan. The impact of cultural change should not be, but often is, underestimated, often resulting in a lack of sufficient staff to manage the plan. Care must be taken to identify and eliminate barriers that might divert necessary energy and resources from the change effort, as this would negatively affect the agency's capacity to deal with change.

3. Involvement of Users

Soliciting active involvement and input from those who do and will utilize ASSIST is a necessary component if change management is going to be effective. This ensures issues, concerns, and the needs of users will be incorporated into the change management process. This fosters a feeling of ownership by the users and promotes acceptance of the system. In addition, users are a valuable resource that can be utilized to assist in implementation of a change management initiative.

4. Consistent and Active Communication

Communication is arguably the most important component of a change management effort. These plans are most effective when communication is consistent, clear, and maintained through a variety of methods. Development of a communications plan that incorporates focused and reliable communication about the effect and nature of the business process changes associated with ASSIST will better enable users to obtain maximum benefit of the system once implemented.

5. Support of Informal Leaders within DHR

The process of change management is strongly affected by the level of support provided by an organization's informal leaders. These leaders should be identified and utilized to promote the changes that will accompany implementation of ASSIST, as well as provide valuable assistance in overcoming negative opinions about the system that have resulted from prior automation experiences.

6. Preparation for Productivity Decline Following Implementation

The reduction in productivity following deployment and the accompanying negative impact are realities. It is helpful to incorporate into the change management plan opportunities to acknowledge this factor and plan for it. It is critical to support field staff during the transition and learning period, giving them the opportunity to focus on adjusting to business process changes.

7. Monitoring of Overall Level of Organizational and Business Process Change

The implementation of a new information system such as ASSIST brings about accompanying changes in business processes and often in organizational structure. Other changes taking place in the agency such as reorganization and realignment of job functions can have a significant impact on the success of managing the changes brought about by implementation of an information system. The organization needs time to adjust to one change prior to introducing further changes.

8. Review of Prior Successes/Failures for Change Implementation

This includes reviewing and evaluating the agency's history of failures and successes in the implementation of change management initiatives. It is essential to understand how the successes and failures can potentially affect current change efforts. The level of resistance to change and the extent to which the agency manages resistance effectively play an important role and must be evaluated.

Methodology - Five Stages

Stage 1: Build **Foundation for Cultural Change Management/CCM Preparations**
This stage involves administrative and planning activities, including the task of establishing an initial support base and foundation for future activities. Various audiences should be identified and strategies should be explored to determine how best to assist them through change. Communication should be centralized and incorporate a specific plan for establishing and maintaining effective communication. The status of ASSIST should be communicated to the organization.

- Obtain senior management support ("buy-in") and ensure understanding so that management is able to promote changes and articulate benefits of ASSIST. Encourage management to communicate with counterparts who have experienced change management initiatives in other states.
- Conduct regional/county meetings and participate in meetings already scheduled (such as County Directors' Association, Semi-annual Conferences, Service Supervisors' Association Meeting, State QA Meetings, etc.) for the purpose of updating and communicating the current status of ASSIST. The meetings should include discussion of the new direction that is being taken and factors affecting the decisions made. Initial communication should provide an overview of the project and, in an effort to reestablish credibility, should include acknowledgement and acceptance of any prior negative experiences. Acknowledge level of discomfort, as well as the anticipated period of reduced productivity following implementation.
- Conduct interviews/focus groups to identify potential barriers, resistance, and concerns. Learn what is liked and disliked about the current system and determine whether these preferences can be incorporated. Identify informal opinion leaders, potential supporters, and potential opposition for inclusion in the focus groups. Prepare and implement readiness surveys to determine attitudes toward technology, morale, job satisfaction, ASSIST Release 2, etc.
- Identify users ("experts") from county/SDHR and solicit their guidance and program/procedural input from the beginning of the process.
- Establish a pool of county/SDHR users (mentors, other supporters) who will be utilized to assist with implementation of the change management effort. Engage opinion leaders, obtain buy-in, and utilize their support. Plan to conduct regular meetings.
- Establish an assessment tool as a means of identifying those who may benefit from basic computer skills training. Provide basic computer training courses through CIS End User Training.

Stage 2: Evaluate Business Processes and Plan Support for Change
This stage involves understanding the nature of changes associated with ASSIST and developing methods to support users through the transition. It is essential to understand how day-to-day work will change so this can be communicated to the users. The focus is primarily on the changes in business processes.

- Review current business processes and identify improvement opportunities. Understand how ASSIST will perform functions that are currently performed manually and how functions that are already automated will change.
- Document new workflow. Create new practices and procedures documentation. Create process variations. Understand how daily activities are impacted. Prepare informational documents to distribute to the users, outlining the nature of anticipated changes.
- As the new application is being developed, prepare a working prototype or PowerPoint presentation that will allow users to see the look and feel of the new system.

Stage 3: Communicate Nature of Changes to Organization/Conduct Communication Activities

This stage involves the delivery of information that was gathered in the second stage. Multiple methods of communication should be utilized and consideration should be given to the different audiences.

- Establish a specific plan regarding communication to include identified audiences, frequency, the most effective methods, and a feedback mechanism. Consider the following strategies:
  - Update the user community about the status of ASSIST and communicate the changes in business processes. Continue to acknowledge the level of discomfort, as well as the anticipated period of reduced productivity following implementation.
  - Discuss anticipated changes and prepare to answer questions.
  - Address concerns regarding duplication due to field recording.
  - Distribute documents that have been developed to help the user community.
  - Communicate periodic messages to the user community (e.g. a particular aspect of ASSIST and the associated business process changes), keeping in mind that disparate information may be overwhelming.
  - Solicit feedback and encourage communication from user community. Ensure that feedback loop is in place so that users are assured they are being heard. Incorporate feedback into communications plan.
- Consider the following methods of communication, remembering that language should be in terms easily understood by users:
  - Conduct regional/county informational sessions and participate in meetings already scheduled.
  - Maintain and update the DHR News. Consider establishing an ASSIST web page on the DHR News.
  - Establish and utilize email distribution list comprised of county/SDHR users identified in the first stage as assisting with the implementation of the change management initiative.

- Update and distribute the ASSIST newsletter and program area newsletters.

Stage 4: Prepare for System Implementation
This stage involves steps to be taken as time for deployment approaches.
Continue offering training in basic computer skills and keyboarding through CIS.

- Update on-line policy and user manuals.
- Implement the plan for utilization of the Help Desk.
- Implement the ASSIST Training Plan provided by the vendor.
- Conduct User Acceptance Testing, establish feedback loop, then make any necessary changes as a result.
- Deploy the system to identified Pilot counties, establish feedback loop, then make any necessary changes as a result.
- Establish a detailed plan to provide on-site support during and immediately following implementation.

Stage 5: Assess Effectiveness of Change Management Process
This phase involves evaluating the process, making revisions as needed, implementing the revisions, and continuously refining the change management plan.

- Conduct site visits to county offices to provide support and discuss changes. Validate the impact of the system.
- Establish a plan for trainers to conduct site visits to county offices to provide evaluation and individual instruction as needed. Another benefit of this step will be reduction of potential errors being made by users.
- Solicit feedback about the process by utilizing the communication methods mentioned above.

Staffing Plan

Essential to the effectiveness of the change management plan is the requirement that dedicated resources exist for implementation of the plan. Without the resources to execute the plan, the organization's ability to manage change is greatly compromised. Consider the following possible staffing plan for primary responsibilities:

1. Core positions:

- *Change Management Program Supervisor* will coordinate and lead all activities related to the change management initiative. This position serves as the ASSIST liaison to other resources needed to implement the change management plan, such as the training unit and Help Desk. This position will oversee creation of materials and schedules, will lead the effort to identify and document business process changes, and will manage the evaluation process.

- *Communications Program Specialist* will create ASSIST-related communication and publications. The majority of this person's work will be focused on Stage Three and will continue post-implementation.

2. DHR Staff:

- *Deputy Commissioner* will promote the changes brought about by ASSIST and will articulate the benefits of the system. This person will be knowledgeable about the nature of the changes.
- *DHR Management* will have a role similar to the Deputy Commissioner. Managers will prepare their areas of responsibility for the changes. They will understand the system and will communicate positively how the system will impact business processes and the long-term benefits of the changes.
- *DHR Office/Field Staff* will understand the changes that ASSIST will bring and will internalize the effect the changes will have on their day-to-day activities. They will provide assistance in various forms during the entire project.

3. ASSIST Staff (state and vendor):

- *Project Manager* will provide guidance to the Change Management Program Supervisor and Communications Program Specialist. The Project Manager will review materials and schedules and will provide input and approval before distribution or implementation.
- *Business Analysts* will assist in defining how ASSIST will impact business processes and will provide information about the way in which ASSIST will perform existing processes.

In addition to these primary positions, many other areas will support the change management initiative.

Schedule

1. Stage One (Build Foundation of Cultural Change Management/CCM Preparation) of the change management initiative will continue throughout the life of the project.
2. Stage Two (Evaluate Business Processes and Plan Support for Change) will continue throughout the life of the project. The primary focus of this stage will be during development of the detailed system requirements.
3. Stage Three (Communicate Nature of Changes to Organization/Conduct Communication Activities) will continue throughout the life of the project. This stage focuses on communicating business process changes but the steps also apply to the general goal of keeping users informed about the system. Some of the activities will begin immediately and others will be dependent upon the timeframe of the application development.

4. Stage Four (Prepare for System Implementation) will begin as time approaches for deployment of the system. This stage will take into consideration the detailed and specific plans for Training and Implementation as well as Help Desk.
5. Stage Five (Assess Effectiveness of Change Management Process) will continue throughout the life of the project.