Innovative Methods to Manage the Investigatory Caseload

Angie Matthes
Manager of Investigations
Initial Intake/ Inquiry Phase

- Incoming/pending complaints
- High priority complaints
- Tracking case assignment
  - ensures equitable distribution
  - provides great statistical info for the manager
Managing Paper Files

- Cover sheets & cheat sheets
- Use of templates for reports, letters, orders, interview guides
- Physical separation according to categories
  - files awaiting response, upcoming interviews, APRNs, priority I, by age of case, type of licensee ....
Managing Electronic Files

- Email folders for individual cases
- Arrange word files per individual case
  - 2017>Doe, Jane NP March>
  - Keep all files related in one place
- Utilize consistent naming methods
- Use of spreadsheets
Preparing for Licensee Interviews

- Plan, plan, plan!
- Use templates & customize for complex cases
- Organize and flag documents, particularly with drug diversion cases
  - Keep MARs, MD orders, flow sheets, and med pulls together per each patient
  - Know your evidence
Sanction Review Minutes

- **OneNote**
  - Moved from legal pad notetaking to electronic searchable database
  - Arranged by year and by date
  - Allows a summary of cases presented for sanction decision making process
  - Can search keywords such as licensee name

- Summarizing cases for presentation
Preparing for Settlement & Hearings

- Case presentation
- Summarize the info
  - script/notes for foundation questions
  - licensee, complaint, investigation results, factors considered
  - Use of timelines, drug audit tools
Tips for the Manager

- Frequent contact with new investigators
- Use of database/spreadsheet for dashboard reporting
- Pending complaints under review
Angie Matthes, MBA, MHA, RN, CI
Manager-Investigations
NC Board of Nursing
amatthes@ncbon.com
EVIDENCE-BASED INVESTIGATION

- Implement investigative practices that are supported by evidence and best practices
  - How is public protection achieved?
  - Is discipline effective?
  - Rate of recidivism?

- Consider alternatives to investigations:
  - Alternative monitoring program
  - Tools for prevention and early-intervention
  - Advisory letters
PRIORITIZE INVESTIGATIONS

- Get the most bang for your investigative buck
  - Which cases should be investigated consistent with your Board’s laws, policies and procedures?
  - Investigating complaints that are very minor or unlikely to result in discipline diverts resources from more serious or complex cases.
  - Triage cases by threat to the public, seriousness and repeat violations by nurses.
METRICS FOR SUCCESS

- Establish expectations for overall case resolution time
- Establish timelines for each step of the investigative process (subpoena records, interviews, report writing, etc.)
- Standardize investigations for specific case types
- Utilize standard formats, boilerplate and templates to streamline the process
ASSIGNING A CASELOAD

Factors for managers to consider:

- Expertise of investigator
- Seriousness of case
- Complexity of investigation
- Available resources
- Expected length of time to complete investigation
- Variety and interest for investigator
- Opportunity for education and growth
ASSIGNING A CASELOAD (CONT.)

- Overwhelming investigators with too many cases should be avoided
  - Contributes to frustration and poor morale if the workload is not achievable

- Assign a mixed caseload
  - Substantive variety
  - Variations in estimated case resolution time
    - Simple cases that are likely to quickly resolve
    - Complex cases that will take longer to resolve
TIPS FOR INVESTIGATORS

- Spend the appropriate amount of time and resources on an investigation
  - Avoid fishing
  - Work to hit the “sweet spot”
    - Obtain appropriate records
    - Investigation should be sufficient to support discipline or dismissal
KEEP IT MOVING

- “Touch it once” principle
  - Are you going back to the case file more than once for the same thing?
- Inertia
  - Avoid “paralysis analysis”
  - Investigations shouldn’t languish at decision points
  - If unsure of next steps, consult early on
  - Make a decision
PERIODIC CASE REVIEW

- Establish regular time to meet with investigators to discuss cases
  + Address aging cases
  + Discuss difficulties or strategies
  + Is there something impeding progress?
  + Consider next steps/prepare for hearing
ASSESS INVESTIGATOR PERFORMANCE

- Measure performance
- Set and reevaluate goals
- Monitor case resolution time
  - Total number of cases
    - Number of cases meeting standard
    - Number of cases below standard
ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR TEAM

- Reward high achievers
  - Praise and recognition go a long way
  - Use high performing staff to mentor and onboard new investigators
- Post your team’s results
  - Provide a visual of trends showing increased productivity or reduced case turnaround time
EVALUATE THE PROCESS

- Continue to evaluate your processes
  - NCSBN resources
  - Look at other high achieving Boards processes
  - Seek input from your team
INNOVATIVE METHODS TO MANAGE THE INVESTIGATORY CASELOAD

TRANSFORMING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE
CONSIDER THE BEGINNING

- What are your timelines?
- Stamped right on the cover of your file
- Filed in your crate/drawer/briefcase according to file number
- Priorities get best seating
- Keep a hot stack
Ink Stamped on the Cover of Case File

CMT =  
Case Management Team

Responsible for opening complaints to investigations

Priority:
CMT Date:
Investigator:
ER Respondent Letter
WHPS Respondent Letter
Respondent Letter
Complainant Letter
Whistleblower

Notes:
Sketching Out the Investigative Plan

- Use an ‘Investigative Plan’ template  handout #1
- Add and refine as you go – investigations morph
- Triage investigation (Investigative Request Checklist  handout #2)
- Do you send for information or does someone else?
- Managing the numbers when they get up there
Tracking your Activity

Paper
- Activity Worksheet *handout* #3
- Not considered evidence
- Transfer info to data base
- Note due dates in margin
- Invest in sticky notes

Technology
- Outlook Task
- Outlook Calendar
- Database functions
Use Templates to Keep Track

- Contacts sheet  *handout #4*
- Medication Administration Documentation Worksheet (MADD Worksheet)  *handout #5*
- Populate your report template to jump start writing  *handout #6*
- Cross off reports on printed page of work queue
Look at the Big Picture

- The Weekly Report  handout #
- Excel spreadsheet  handout #
- Unusual Occurrences
READY TO TACKLE YOUR FILES?
How else can I help you organize?

Catherine Woodard, Associate Director, Discipline
WA State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Division
catherinewoodard@doh.wa.gov  360-236-4757