Innovative Methods to Manage the Investigatory Caseload

Angie Matthes

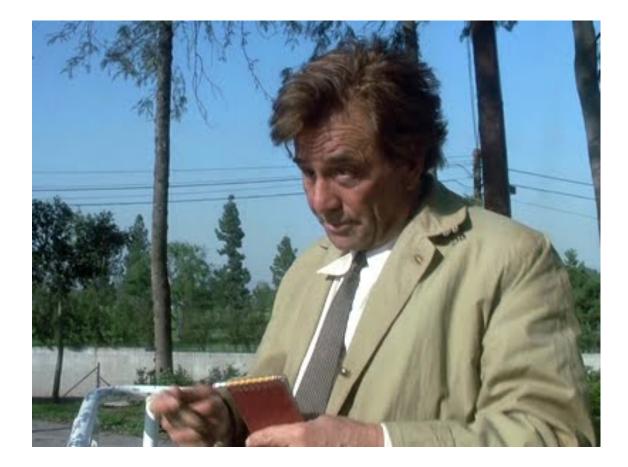**Manager of Investigations**

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**

NC Board of Nursing

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

Barbara Damchik-Dykes, J.D.

MANAGING THE INVESTIGATIVE CASELOAD

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