

# **Accelerated Corrective Action Team (ACAT) Model**

**H&W Independent Solutions, Inc.**

78365 Highway 111 #316

La Quinta, CA 92253

Telephone: 760-347-5505

Fax: 760-347-9987

Email: [info@hwsolutions.com](mailto:info@hwsolutions.com)



## **Accelerated Corrective Action Team (ACAT) Model**

### **Provided by H&W Independent Solutions**

**This is a brief overview** of an “Accelerated Corrective Action Team” (ACAT) model used by H&W and our consultant teams in cases where rapid change in response to immediate Jeopardy findings is necessary, or where sustained, high intensity change management is necessary due to resistance to change, coupled with the presence of long-term ineffective supports. It is the specific implementation elements of the ACAT model that make it creative and successful. The results can be remarkable and, if implemented correctly, this model is effective in producing sustainable change.

The model works best if the key elements are in put place early in the process. Intensity is key and separates the ACAT concept from the traditional corrective approach of training staff and completing follow-up monitoring/feedback on a periodic basis. The concept uses a team approach with several members onsite on a constant basis. This hands on approach focuses on very quick improvement/change and is especially useful for new projects, situations where staff is resistive or supervisors are weak. By constantly being onsite, the team not only provides ongoing training but observes results and gives immediate feedback. The intensity can be overwhelming (which is the point) so the Team, and especially the Management Leader, need to be skilled in supporting staff through change and involving them in the process.

**Organization:** The ACAT model uses a joint cooperative approach between H&W’s consulting team and the facility’s leadership and staff. Change is most easily sustained if facility staff at all levels are involved in the design and implementation of the strategy and planned activities. This fosters ownership in the change and the methodology, and creates an environment where the process can be maintained and enhanced once the consulting team completes their assignment.

The H&W team consists of a Project Leader and a number of Team Process Facilitators, depending on the size of the facility and the number of living units included in the project. Ideally, there will be one Team Facilitator per living unit, if the facility is organized in such a manner, or a facilitator per every 50-60 residents involved in the project. The Project Leader will be responsible for communications between the project teams and facility management, schedule coordination and ensuring proper H&W resources are available for mentoring and training the multiple skill sets required by the ACAT.

The facility will be responsible for providing Management Leaders and Implementation Team Members. Management Leaders should be chosen from the executive leadership of the facility. In past instances, facility directors, assistant directors and other department heads have served in this capacity. It is imperative that the Management Leader have access to the executive decision makers of the facility and the authority to make on-the-spot decisions regarding policy and implementation. One Management leader per living unit should be assigned.

The Implementation Team Members should be drawn from the natural support team for each living area. This would include QDDPs, Nurses, Psychologists, Social Workers, Direct Support Staff, etc., who “normally” participate in the supports for the residents of the living areas. Of course, these individuals need to be skilled in their area of expertise, have excellent communication skills and be willing to serve in this intense and, often, highly emotionally charged position. It is advisable to provide one Team member for each 8-12 residents.

**Implementation:** The H&W team will meet with the Management Leaders to review the specific requirements and deficiencies anticipated in the target living areas. From this review, Team

## **Accelerated Corrective Action Team (ACAT) Model**

### **Provided by H&W Independent Solutions**

members will be selected that best meet the skills necessary to address these deficiencies and who present the highest probability for successful participation in the change project. Following selection, some basic training in facilitation, communication and change management will be presented to the teams.

It is imperative that the Management Leader and Team Facilitator spend time with the Team for preparation. This involves a review of the process, potential challenges and expected outcomes. In addition the Team reviews home schedules, programs, intense consumer needs etc. There should also be initial meetings with Direct Support Professionals (DSP) in the target living areas so they understand the process and have an opportunity to ask questions/express concerns. The Team members are required to work at the home either in the early morning shift or afternoon until 9:00 PM so there are always at least two team members at the home when individuals and DSP are there. The Management Leader rotates between the shifts providing guidance and support to team members. The Team meets together to review progress and discuss issues, etc, daily and then meet with the DSP at shift change overlap for updates/discussion. During a typical ACAT implementation, there is significant improvement within the first week. DSP are trained on skill/behavior programs, interaction, values, privacy, etc. Meaningful interaction improves dramatically. In most cases initial suspicion and resistance by DSP gives way to acceptance and even excitement. After the initial meetings, the DSP will be more enthused and start offering their ideas.

Initially the Team actually helps with the service delivery. In this way they can experience the challenges of the staff they are working with, get to know the staff, the individuals and their routines, and model expectations and convey a "we are all in this together" atmosphere. That approach also provides extra resources so a Team member can pull a DSP out of the immediate area/job duties for in-service/feedback, etc., in a more private setting (usually somewhere else at the home like a bedroom or office) as needed. Within days Team Leaders should be able to fade to less constant hands-on assistance and provide ongoing feedback (especially positive) immediately/on-the-spot as needed.

The Management Leader is critical and must be skilled in people management skills, communicating, creating positive change/teamwork and expertise in the target improvement areas. They become a teacher as well as a Lead. Mentoring the formal supervisor during the process should be an expected outcome. Another positive byproduct is Team members increasing their leadership skills to expand your pool of potential leaders. The more natural the Team (i.e. IDT) the better, since they should know the staff/consumers already. This also allows them to adjust programs as needed in a natural forum. There interdisciplinary make-up should help in brainstorming alternative approaches on specific issues. However, they need to be committed to the process and have at least the basic skills necessary. The natural supervisor should be part of the team if at all possible since one outcome is also improving their knowledge/skills for long term sustainability. In the consultant's experience, two weeks is usually sufficient time in order to start fading the time onsite.

**Challenges:** Change is often difficult for some and DSPs may feel overwhelmed by the intensity. Initial suspicion or resistance by some DSPs is natural and should be anticipated. This may be evidenced through their verbal behavior/body language or by increased call-offs or use of leave. There needs to be an outlet through frank, open meetings with both groups and individuals. Creating an environment where staff can express concerns/feelings without negative consequences is a key. However, if resistance by some continues or escalates

## **Accelerated Corrective Action Team (ACAT) Model** **Provided by H&W Independent Solutions**

Management must be willing to immediately transfer difficult staff to other living units or change their assignments as rapidly as possible to avoid implementation problems. This includes the professional staff and formal supervisor if absolutely necessary.

Pushback from the Team Members may also occur after a period of time. This may happen if the complete commitment for time and scheduling is not communicated well or is unclear to the Team Members. It may also occur if the Team Members are not given enough relief from their normal job duties, or are not allowed to return to those duties in a timely manner at the completion of their commitment to the project. It is very critical that the Management Leader stay in constant communication with the Team and be onsite as much as possible in the first 2-4 weeks to ensure support, communication and follow-up. Again, it is the intensity of support for staff and the constant observation and feedback that make this process work. While you should expect to see a marked improvement within the first week, it takes at least six (6) weeks to make change sustainable if everyone is on-board and cooperative, but plan on eight (8) weeks before starting to back off or withdraw the additional supports by the Team Members and Management Leader.

Team members must also be sensitive to the impact on individuals served. Rapid change, even if positive, may result in unintended, negative responses on their part, especially if they pick up stress/anxiety on the part of the DSPs. This is particularly important for individuals who have limited communication skills or those who already display challenging behaviors. Again, creating a positive atmosphere and providing support during the change is a key.

**Benefits:** The number one benefit is the rapid change in the manner in which supports are delivered and the effectiveness of those supports. For organizations that have been found non-compliant with ICF/IID regulations, are experiencing Immediate Jeopardy situations, or are under exceptional scrutiny, this process will provide sustainable change in high visibility situations. Especially in situations where more traditional change management techniques have not been effective, this process will create change and identify barriers to that change quickly.

Secondly, the process trains facility staff to become change agents, manage change within the organization and yields a process that is repeatable in other areas or programs at the facility. Internalizing the change process is a characteristic of the best organizations and will provide the facility with the means to respond to future high need situations.

Additionally, the process itself fosters communication and builds team effectiveness. Through incorporating staff from all levels of the organization, new channels of communication will be developed, and enhanced working relationships will be built.

Lastly, this process affords the organization an opportunity to identify new leaders within the organization. Those individual staff members who are willing to step forward and participate in the process and be successful are candidates for future leadership positions.