

Child Focus, Inc.ⁱ

Child Focus, Inc. (CFI), whose mission is to join with communities in strengthening families and improving the quality of life for children, offers a wide variety of programs in Clermont, Hamilton, and Brown counties in Ohio. With an agency budget in excess of \$11 million dollars, the spectrum of services includes Head Start programs for children ages 0–5, parenting education, family literacy, GED test preparation, substance abuse prevention, partial hospitalization, mental health prevention and counseling services in schools, foster care, independent living, case management, outpatient individual, family, and group therapy, diagnostic testing, psychiatric services, and professional training. CFI's 240 employees have a broad range of professional education including high school, associate's, bachelor's, master's, Ph.D., R.N., and M.D. degrees. All staff share the authority, dedication, and commitment to promote the mission of serving children and families. Facilities include intranet, Internet, a Web site (<http://www.child-focus.org>), specifically designed management information systems with necessary office equipment, 22 vehicles to provide client transportation, and two commercial kitchens that serve more than 800 meals a day. Facilities and programs are supervised by a volunteer Board of Trustees and by the accreditation standards of the National Association for the Education of the Young Child, Day Care Licensing Regulations, Head Start Performance Standards, and Ohio Departments of Education, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, and Job and Family Services.

As CFI continues to expand its programs through new and larger contracts, the biggest challenge is to provide quality services. Personnel and human resources issues are another challenge. They continually strive to find qualified staff who are willing to work with some of the most challenging children and dysfunctional families. Although their turnover rate is approximately 15 percent, most of it is in less-skilled positions. Consequently, this loss of staff increases training costs. Training existing staff to meet higher educational standards and continuing to find office and service space to meet growing needs is also a challenge.

CFI's diversity of programming, reporting, and funding to multiple agencies and organizations requires continuous management at all levels within the agency. The governing Board of Trustees for Child Focus is a diverse group of volunteers that have

experience as attorneys, teachers, homemakers, and CFI consumers. Federal, state, and county legislative and regulatory changes can affect programming or present financial challenges. These entities, in turn, may have competing philosophies, which complicate administration or delay program implementation.

CFI management has several procedures in place to identify and manage these organizational challenges. Customer, staff, and collaborators' recommendations and complaints are identified through evaluation and administrative programs in both the Early Childhood and Behavioral Health divisions and are continuously monitored by staff, management, and the Board of Trustees. Through a continuous strategic planning process, CFI identifies ways in which to improve and expand its services through program modification or development.

The CEO is committed to building a total quality organization. If you were asked to help in this quality journey, what questions would you want answered? What advice would you provide?

ⁱ Acknowledgement: Child Focus, Inc., 2003 Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce Small Business Awards Application. Our thanks go to Tara Dawson for providing this information and granting permission to use it for this case.