



April 2015

Project Spotlight: DHS Team Eliminates the Backlog and Creates Timely Turnaround for Maltreatment Reports

In April of 2014, a court order was issued to improve the timeliness of maltreatment investigation reports at the Department of Human Services (DHS). In response, the Licensing Division at the DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) took action to address a sizeable backlog and design a more efficient process for handling new reports. They partnered with the Continuous Improvement (CI) Team at DHS to tackle an ambitious plan head-on with very successful results.

In early 2014, the Licensing Investigations unit had over 600 maltreatment investigation reports pending. More than half of the reports were between six months-to-three years old. Yet in a three-month period the unit had completed twice the usual amount – 451 reports, or 150 each month on average.

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CI on the Road...

The Minnesota Office of CI will be presenting at two conferences in late April: the National Governors Association Summit on April 23 and 24 and the Performance Excellence Network Conference on April 27 and 28.



The DHS project team is pictured above with Commissioner Lucinda Jesson, center.

The DHS CI Team and the Licensing Intake and Investigations Teams – with additional support from DHS Background Studies staff, MN.IT applications staff, and others – put changes in place to eliminate the backlog and ensure that a minimal number of reports were unfinished after 60 days. The changes included:

- Creation of a completely electronic process that streamlined work among units and increased efficiency. To manage the case load, MN.IT Services designed a FileNet workflow, which includes reminders and deadlines specific to individual steps in the process.
- Centralization of work, so staff could see what work had been assigned, to whom, and timelines of reports from receipt to completion.
- Creation of a SharePoint blog for cross-divisional input of documents and resources.
- Consolidation of tasks in order to eliminate multiple document handoffs.
- Establishment of an electronic method for referrals and cross-reporting to other agencies in order to avoid courier mail delays.

With the backlog eliminated and these new and improved processes in place, employees are energized to continue their work on maltreatment investigations.

Highlighting Improvement Projects Impacting Health and Safety

In [December's newsletter](#), we highlighted the seven winning projects from the 2014 Governor's Continuous Improvement (CI) Awards. But with 33 nominated projects – all worthy of recognition in their own right – we wanted to take a moment to shine a spotlight on all of these projects and the positive impact they are making in Minnesota.

This month, we highlight the excellent work of four teams whose projects are helping make the state a healthier, safer place to live and work.

Identifying Birth Defects Faster and Ensuring Parents are Equipped

The [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\) Birth Defects program](#) was one of the many groups recognized as part of the Agency Achievement Award presented to MDH at the 2014 Governor's CI Awards.

The program helps children with birth defects thrive, grow, and be as healthy as possible. The program assembled a Birth Defects Data Collection Kaizen team to establish a more efficient process for identifying children with birth defects and classifying their conditions. Following the Kaizen event, staff improved transparency by process mapping clearly identified tasks and removing unnecessary delays. Tasks were re-distributed for efficiency, and a centralized manual for coding birth defects was implemented in order to maintain consistent labeling. A strong focus on consistency between coders reduced the amount of cases sent for review by 61 percent. Additionally, the median time of completion for cases dropped by almost 27 percent. The removal of routine reviews in straightforward case classifications has also decreased the potential of future costs spent on genetics consultation. All told, by streamlining these processes, families are connected more quickly to the services and resources they need to meet their child's unique developmental needs.

Improving Flu Testing Processes

MDH's Agency Achievement Award also recognized efforts by the [Public Health Laboratory \(PHL\)](#) to improve flu testing processes. Improvements made by PHL include automation of various tasks, clearer definition of roles and responsibilities for all team members, and the removal of unnecessary handoffs. During the 2013 and 2014 flu season, these efficiencies enabled 70 percent of flu samples to be tested within a turnaround time of 7 days, a 13.7 percent improvement over the previous year. Systems were also put into place to address gaps in the quality system and reduce redundancy throughout testing. This

resulted in zero mistakes in laboratory testing for 2014, meaning all flu samples that received testing ended up in the correct workflow and received the correct testing approach. PHL's efforts included a Kaizen event, which identified gaps in the Laboratory Information System and outlined requirements for a new system that will further improve the testing process.

Increased Efficiency and Reduced Process Time for Client Disability Determinations

At the Department of Human Services (DHS), the agency's State Medical Review Team (SMRT) was nominated for its efforts to make client disability determinations more quickly and efficiently. SMRT serves children and adults with serious physical or mental health impairments. Disability determinations are done to confirm client's eligibility for public assistance from SMRT. Speed is vital, as many who count on SMRT services for medical treatment are homeless or live in shelters.

SMRT met its goals by creating plain language welcome packets and prompt follow-up letters to be delivered by mail, and removing unnecessary requirements for referrals. SMRT also implemented Standard Work processes, which eliminated the need to use an external contractor for most determinations. These improvements resulted in significant cost reduction and avoidance for DHS, both in contractor costs and reduction of required staff time. SMRT also started collaborating with the Disability Linkage Line and Community Living Supports programs to ensure all clients SMRT certifies as disabled are provided information and assistance when applying for Social Security disability benefits.

Redesigning Processes to Build a Safer Place to Live and Work

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) has reduced employee and resident safety incidents at its [Silver Bay Veterans Home](#), thanks in large part to a number of recently implemented process improvements. Employees at the Silver Bay home used Kaizen, Lean, and Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) processes to guide their improvement efforts. By creating and redesigning various standards, review processes, and programs they are building the home into a safer place to live and work.

More specifically, MDVA installed new ceiling lifts, developed a safety officer position, and introduced cross-departmental safety education opportunities. Facility changes were made according to the ergonomic philosophy of fitting the job to the person and not the person to the work. This philosophy has been modeled by ensuring facilities and work stations have the appropriate, ergonomically correct equipment. Incident reviews are now completed by residents and employees immediately after all incidents using the root cause analysis (RCA) process. Finally, MDVA introduced household staff meetings, safety meetings, yearly safe resident handling audits, and continuing education and training for all staff. Across the board, the efforts have focused on proactive and preventative safety, and the results have begun to show. Both the number of reported injuries and costs related to workplace injuries are on a significant decline since these improvements went into effect.

Upcoming Training & Events

May 11, Intro to CI, *Full*, ([Waitlist](#))

May 12, Problem Solving, *Full*, ([Waitlist](#))

May 12, Process Improvement Measurement, *Full*, ([Waitlist](#))

May 14, Leading/Supporting CI, *Full*, ([Waitlist](#))

June 9, Intro to CI, [Register](#)

June 9, Problem Solving, [Register](#)

June 10-11, Kaizen Facilitation, [Register](#) **9 open seats**

View all Lean events at mn.gov/CI

Register for trainings on [our Eventbrite page](#).

Stay tuned, as more training dates will be announced soon!