

CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR ON-SITE EVALUATIONS

No matter how carefully teams prepare for on site-visits, conflicts may arise. What follows are examples of actual problem situations which have occurred during school visits. For each type of problem situation, a solution has been suggested. Please note, however, that these solutions are not intended to be “the only answer.” When conducting on-site evaluations, you must use your professional judgment on how to handle conflicts and problem-situations, keeping in mind that each school is unique and that what worked in one situation, may not work in others.

PEOPLE/PERSONALITY CHALLENGES

Challenge

One of the team members has an “out to get them” approach and seems to feel that the school is “guilty until proven otherwise.” This person works independently of the other team members and during the visit sends a student in the school home to get information she felt was necessary for the visit, without consulting with the other team members. Then during the exit interview, this person voiced opinions that were not the consensus of the team.

Solution:

Regroup as a team and try to clear the air with this member. Try to explain the appropriate attitude for an evaluator and stress to him/her the importance of working together and remaining in constant communication with all team members. Remind the team member that the Team Report is a consensus of all team members, if one evaluator disagrees, he/she may file a minority report to the Commission, but at the exit interview, the team must present a united front.

Challenge

The owner of the school being visited is hostile and uncooperative. Early on in the visit, this person refuses to deal with the NACCAS staff person (or one of the other team members).

Solution:

Be diplomatic and patient, and try to involve the rest of the team in communicating with the school owner. Gradually “ease” the staff person (or other evaluator) back into the picture by including them in discussions with the school owner, until the school owner is again working with this person.

Challenge

The owner of the school being visited has a hostile attitude toward the on-site visit team. This situation may be compounded in cases of special visits where complaints are being investigated, for example.

Solution:

Establish rapport with the school. Explain your requests for documentation which address the complaint allegations, and present your requests in a positive manner. Make the school owner understand that you are only there to report your findings. Explain that it was the Commission that required the visit and it is the Commission who will make the decision regarding the school’s accreditation. If the school owner feels that the complaint allegations are not true, say that he/she can assist you by helping to prove it with documentation.

Challenge

One of the other team members receives services in the school and you find out later that they may have a conflict of interest.

Solution:

It’s very important that you immediately notify the NACCAS staff member on the visit of the situation and follow up with a letter to the NACCAS office. The evaluator receiving the service should be immediately informed, in private, that such behavior is not allowed and must not continue. It is critical that the Rules of Practice and Procedure are adhered to during on-site visits. The Commission is put in a very vulnerable position when professional and ethical behavior on the part of evaluators is not followed at all times.

Challenge

The school does not allow the team to have adequate access to student files. School personnel require the team to work with student files only in the file room where there is not a place to work or write.

Solution:

The team should request the school to bring selected files to another room with adequate working conditions. If the school will not cooperate, document it in the team report. Accreditation is voluntary, and the Rules of Practice and Procedure requires schools to permit the on-site evaluation team to carry out the visit.

Procedural Challenge

The team requests several documents, including student files and tuition accounting records. However, the items returned are incomplete and are given to team members sporadically during the day.

One Solution:

The team should come together and assemble a comprehensive list of all documents requested. The cumulative list should then be given to the Director of the school and the team should keep a copy to check off items as they are received. The list should also include the time of the request. Then, one hour after the list has been delivered; the team should give the Director an update on the status of the documents received. If significant documents are not received after two hours after the list is delivered, the team should inform the Director that the team report will be developed on the assumption that the documents requested do not exist or are missing. (Caution should be used to not give the impression that the team is in a hurry. The team should stress to the school that they will remain as long as necessary to review the documents available, but they will not wait unnecessarily for documents that the school cannot or will not provide.)

Prevention

The team should coordinate all requests for documents with one team member. The initial sample of files to be reviewed should be selected early in the process. (Not more than one hour after arrival.) The list of needed documents should be as descriptive as possible. For example, for each student selected: 1) admission records, 2) ATB testing records, 3) financial and accounting records, 4) attendance records, 5) satisfactory progress records, including all academic records. Multiple copies of the list should be given to the CEO so they can be distributed to the appropriate school personnel.

Technical Challenge

The school has a confusing and complicated transfer policy because the school is located on a state border and accepts transfer students from several states. There are also discrepancies in what is allowed for transfer students by each state.

Solution:

The team should carefully review the implementation of the school's policy for consistency. Any information obtained from outside sources (contact with state boards for example) should be documented and included in the Team Report.