

The Excellence Network

The Excellence Network (TEN) is dedicated to revolutionizing the culture of service delivery in Ohio. The purpose of The Excellence Network is “igniting and fueling a passion for living life to the fullest through learning, innovation and collaboration.” TEN cultivates competent, passionate, well-trained and experienced service providers capable of promoting optimal health, well-being and community life among the people they serve. TEN also builds and promotes a consistent approach to services throughout the local and regional developmental disabilities system.

The Excellence Network is an initiative of four county boards of developmental disabilities – Fairfield, Hocking, Licking and Perry – and the Mid-East Ohio Regional Council of Governments (MEORC), a COG serving the four counties and 14 others. TEN began with an idea put forward by John Pekar, Superintendent of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The essence of the idea was that TEN would work with providers to improve service quality beyond what is required for compliance with administrative rules, and that individuals and families could rely on a provider’s participation in TEN as a sign of quality.

The Excellence Network supports local efforts by providing guidance to local TEN groups. It serves as the sounding board for new ideas that arise through the work of the local group.

Role of the local TEN group

Each local TEN group promotes The Excellence Network’s mission, vision, and values within its county system. The group includes providers and other stakeholders with a direct interest in better service quality. Each local TEN group works independently in keeping with the mission, vision and values established by TEN.

Recognized membership

Recognized membership is awarded to a provider that successfully completes the application and review process with its local TEN group. The review process is an opportunity to learn together, exchange information in a climate of collaboration and promote innovation in services. Its purpose is to create honest dialogue about the applicant’s accomplishments and opportunities for improvement.

Goals for the recognized membership review process include:

- Produce an unbiased assessment of where providers stand;
- Determine and document service quality;
- Produce information understood and valued by family members;
- Maintain a high standard that providers do not yet achieve but are willing to work toward;
- Operate in accordance with TEN principles of innovation, collaboration and learning.

The review team does not expect perfection. Successful applicants do:

- Commit to the mission, vision and values of The Excellence Network;
- Agree to share information about processes and results with the local TEN review team;
- Commit to ongoing quality improvement.

Recognized membership is one factor to consider when selecting a provider. It is not a substitute for the judgment of individuals and their allies about the best fit of a provider with customers’ requirements.

Recognized membership is valid only in the county where the review takes place. If the applicant wishes to have recognized status in more than one TEN county, the applicant submits an application in each county. Some information will apply across county lines. Local county TEN groups may decide to combine their work for a review extending to multiple counties.

Step 1: Commit to the process

A provider interested in beginning the recognized membership application process first studies TEN's mission, vision and values to see whether they are a good fit. Then, to begin the application process, the applicant notifies the TEN contact person assigned to the county where the provider is seeking recognized membership of the intent to apply.

- **Fairfield County:** Nate Griffin, Director of Quality, Fairfield CBDD, 740-652-7220, ngriffin@fairfielddd.com
- **Licking County:** Chanda Busse, Director of Service Coordination, Licking CBDD, 740-349-1420, Chanda.Busse@LCountyDD.org
- **Perry County:** Marci Jones, SSA Director, Perry CBDD, 740-342-0416, m.jones@perrymrdd.org
- **MEORC:** Kelly Ferenbaugh, Quality Assurance Specialist, 740 -507-8234, kferenbaugh@meorc.com

The local contact forwards the request to the local TEN group and arranges an introductory face-to-face meeting with the applicant representative to provide an overview of the process. The applicant and the local contact agree on a timeline for submitting an application, usually in 1-2 months.

Step 2: Prepare the application

The application has four parts:

- The **organizational profile:** This profile is a straightforward description of services the applicant provides. The review process focuses primarily on services within the county, but multi-county providers also describe the overall agency structure to give a wider context.
- Description of **organizational processes:** The applicant completes the self-study related to key processes and writes concise descriptions of processes. Processes are about HOW. The focus of these descriptions is *not* rule compliance. These descriptions help the review team determine how the applicant works toward high quality services that go above and beyond regulatory requirements.
- Description of **organizational results:** The applicant indicates the outcomes of services in key areas. It is helpful to supply figures documenting success, such as the number of people who have a valued experience, or the number of hours of the valued experience.
- **Supporting documents to demonstrate rule compliance:**
 - ✓ Certification letter(s) from DODD;

- ✓ Past 2 semi-annual Major Unusual Incident (MUI) summaries prepared per DODD regulations;
- ✓ Past 6 months of Unusual Incident (UI) logs;
- ✓ Most recent Provider Compliance reviews for any services provided in counties in the TEN region;
- ✓ Most recent Medication Quality Assurance reviews at sites in the county of application;
- ✓ DODD notification of sanctions related to services in any county and any follow-up communication from DODD.

Step 3: Share the application with the local TEN group

The local TEN group identifies review team members who have the time and commitment to work with the applicant all the way through the review process. One review team member is designated as the facilitator for the review process. Review team members sign a Code of Conduct affirming their agreement to uphold standards of integrity, professional conduct, confidentiality and respect for intellectual property.

Once the application is complete, the review facilitator distributes it to other review team members and schedules a time for the review team and the applicant to meet.

While TEN strives for a review process that is fair and consistent, each applicant brings its own personality, approach and organizational culture. The review team considers the applicant's uniqueness during the review process.

Step 4: Add information to the application as requested by the TEN review team

Even when it receives a complete application packet, the review team may have additional questions of the applicant. The review team may ask for additional clarification of information in the packet. The review team and the applicant agree on a timeline for presenting additional information. At that time, the review team and the applicant meet again to tie up loose ends.

Step 5: The TEN review team collects additional information

The local review team collects and reviews additional information specific to the TEN review process:

Stakeholder interviews: Review team members interview a number of family members, Individual Support Coordinators (ISCs) and other team members for individuals receiving services from the applicant, such as Adult Day Support providers who also serve individuals who receive Homemaker/Personal Care services. The purpose of these interviews is to identify any major “red flag” issues of concern and areas of excellence.

Site visit observations: Review team members take an interactive approach to site visits that is distinct and different from a compliance approach. The focus is on quality of services and quality of life, not on rule adherence. Team members, whenever possible, make site visits in pairs. During site visits team members ask questions that give information not available from any other source.

Step 6: Come to agreement about recognized membership and develop a consensus report

The local review team makes a recommendation to the local TEN group and to the larger Excellence Network about whether to grant recognized member status. The local TEN group and The Excellence Network review the recommendation to make sure that standards are consistent across applications.

The review team facilitator prepares a summary report addressing the applicant's accomplishments and opportunities for improvement. The report is not complete until the local review team and the applicant agree that it accurately reflects both accomplishments and opportunities.

Step 7: Develop a plan for performance improvement

An important part of recognized membership is continuous quality improvement on the part of the recognized member. The report gives the applicant valuable information about opportunities for improvement. The recognized member takes this feedback and develops a plan for performance improvement over the coming year.

Step 8: Work on performance improvement

Part of the responsibility of the local TEN group and of The Excellence Network generally is to support continuous quality improvement by all participants. TEN is a resource to help recognized members identify training and technical assistance designed to address identified opportunities for improvement. TEN occasionally organizes collaborative, performance-based training that distributes training costs over a larger group to bring the costs down for all.

Step 9: Share updates with the local TEN group

The recognized member and the local TEN group agree on a schedule for reporting on progress toward the performance improvement plan. These reports serve a dual purpose. They ensure progress by all recognized members, and they spur conversation among the local TEN group. TEN members often find that others in the group have great ideas, and that conversations within the local TEN group represent an important vehicle for innovation.

Recognized membership stays in effect as long as the local group is satisfied with the member's progress toward performance improvement goals. A change in a provider's legal status could affect TEN recognized member status. If a provider gains or loses certification for a service or changes ownership, it is important to let the local TEN group know right away.

Step 10: Rework and improve the application (only if recognized membership was not granted at step 6)

Once an applicant completes performance improvement efforts designed to address concerns identified in the review process, the next step is to revise the application to reflect improvements and resubmit it to the local TEN group.