

Spotlight On 2021

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Well, it's been another year of navigating an international pandemic, adapting to ever-changing circumstances, and supporting each other as we face challenges we never thought we would. In the human services field specifically, it feels like these difficulties are only amplified by the work that we do – confronting an ongoing staffing crisis, addressing concerns over health and safety, applying virtual solutions to in-person problems, and more.

It's easy (and completely understandable) to get caught up in the negative aspects of this world we live and work in. But in typical CQL fashion, it's especially important to highlight the positive elements and draw out the successes you experience. We try and do that every year in our December edition of Capstone. At the end of every year, we take stock of the last twelve months – recognizing our accomplishments and reflecting on all that has occurred. In this article, we've listed some of these developments in 2021 month-by-month to acknowledge all that has transpired this past year.



January – Welcome A-Board!

To kick off the year, we announced some exciting additions to our Board of Directors. CQL was lucky to add these four nationally-renowned leaders in the field to our organization's leadership:

- Christopher Banks, President & CEO, Autism Society
- Peter Berns, CEO, The Arc of the United States
- Chester Finn, Special Assistant, NYS OPWDD
- Margaret Nygren, Executive Director & CEO, AAIDD

February – A New Webinar Series All About Accreditation

CQL released registration for our 2021 Accreditation Webinar Series in February 2021. From an overview of accreditation, to information about our tools, the integration of data, tips to get organizations prepared, and application of virtual accreditation activities – this series provided hundreds of participants with insight into CQL Accreditation. Now that the 5-part series is complete, you can watch all recordings of the webinars and access PDF versions of the PowerPoint slides.

March – Developments With The CQL Conference

In March 2021, CQL announced the postponement of our biennial conference, which was originally scheduled for October 2021. Following improvements in vaccination rates, enhanced safety protocols, and feedback from our partners, we were happy to later announce the ‘Save-The-Date’ for our 2022 CQL Conference. It will take place in Las Vegas, Nevada from 10/11/22 – 10/14/22 and we hope you can join us! Additional details will be released in 2022 regarding registration, keynotes, breakouts, sponsorship/exhibiting, and the ‘Awards of Excellence.’

April – Our Very First CQL-Hosted Virtual POM Workshop

During this month, we presented our very first CQL-hosted Virtual Personal Outcome Measures® (POM) Workshop. “There were quite a few interesting takeaways from the workshop. This really shifted the way that I thought about the Personal Outcome Measures®,” shares Erica Giaimo of Welcome House Inc., one of the April attendees. The virtual workshops provide a whole new way for disability professionals to learn about the power of the Personal Outcome Measures® in person-centered discovery and planning. Throughout 2022, CQL will be hosting more than a dozen different workshops, some of which still have seats available.

May – A Managed Care Milestone

May brought with it some big news – not just in the world of CQL but especially for managed care! It was announced that UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Tennessee (TN UHC) would be taking steps to become the first managed care organization to pursue CQL Network Accreditation. “We are so pleased that UHC is making this commitment to serving all of its members, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” says Patti Killingsworth, Chief of Long-Term Services and Supports, TennCare.

June – ‘Things That Make You Go ... Huh?’

In our most popular Capstone newsletter of the year, which was published in June 2021, we covered subtle signs of disrespect that are common across human services. The article ‘Dignity and Respect – Things That Make You Go ... Huh?’, authored by CQL Quality Enhancement Specialist Elizabeth Sites, highlights ten examples of disrespect that CQL staff have observed while carrying out services. We listed some ‘everyday’ type situations we have noticed in our work which negatively impact the dignity and respect of people with disabilities.

July – Providing Research Support For Black Students

CQL selected the students for its second cohort of the Disability Research Mentorship Program for Black Graduate Students in July 2021. The program was established in 2020 to help Black students build up their resumes with research publications. Through the program, students are supported to access data to analyze and receive guidance during the research and peer-review publication process. The 2021 students, Regina Frazier and Elizabeth Holliday Morgan, Ph.D., displayed a passion for disability research and valued the impact that it can have on the lives of people with disabilities and the supports that they receive.

August –Safety Protocols For In-Person Activities

In looking ahead to reintroducing in-person activities for services like accreditation, training, and certification, CQL first released safety protocols in August 2021. These measures were designed to protect the health of organizational partners, their staff, people receiving services, and our own employees against the COVID-19 pandemic. Later in the year, we announced that we would be resuming some in-person activities in January 2022. We can't wait to see you all soon!

September – Celebrating DSPs in September (And Beyond)

Every year, CQL celebrates National Direct Support Professional (DSP) Recognition Week and 2021 was no exception. But just one week certainly isn't enough, so we sought out initiatives that have a longer-lasting impact on this essential workforce. We once again partnered with NADSP to collect and share programs that have a meaningful effect on DSPs throughout the entire year. From introducing creative recruitment strategies, to improving employee retention, and expanding recognition efforts, these initiatives are having a tangible impact on DSPs – and better yet – can be replicated by other organizations.

October – Exploring The Power Of Words

In October, we released the Disability Language Study to gain meaningful perspective about the connection between language and disability. We're intending to provide deeper insight into the power of words and how they impact people with disabilities and the disability field. This study is a collaboration between Carli Friedman, Director of Research for CQL and Research Assistant Professor at The University of Illinois at Chicago, Zach Gordon, Production Coordinator for AAIDD, and Liz Weintraub, Senior Advocacy Specialist for AUCD.

November – Some National Leadership Consortium News!

It was BIG news for November! We were so proud (and excited!) to announce that the National Leadership Consortium will become an affiliate of CQL effective January 2022. This new alliance is founded on shared principles and strategic directives. For our respective partners, the affiliation will provide new opportunities for future collaboration on the development of practical guides, timely articles, impactful research, and engaging presentations.

December – A Simplified Process For POM Trainer Re-Certification

Our new, flexible, simplified process for maintaining Personal Outcome Measures® (POM) Trainer Certification took effect in December. The new requirements allow Certified Trainers to 'mix and match' from various categories of the requirements to best meet their goals and needs. In addition, the revised requirements reflect a balance of training and POM interviewing and decision-making skills. We appreciate all of the positive feedback we have received about these changes!

Looking Ahead To 2022

If there is any lesson we've all learned over the last couple of years, it's that 2022 will undoubtedly bring challenges – some we can anticipate and many others we can't yet imagine. But regardless, we will continue to adapt to whatever life throws at us. In the human services sector, there's no other way and our field is especially resilient throughout the toughest of times.

CQL is optimistic though, heading into the new year. We're so excited to resume in-person activities, interact with our partners (without always having to use a computer), and connect again at the 2022 CQL Conference. We hope to see all soon – and not just in Zoom. Happy holidays and an even happier New Year to you all!