Shining a Light on Supervision: Lessons from the Beacons

In this Issue

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In this issue, we highlight how Beacons Centers are putting principles of good supervision into practice, based on lessons from the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative. Please see *www.forumfyi.org* to review previous commentaries in this series.

Ask any youth worker about their first experience working with kids, and there's a decent chance you'll hear a "sink or swim" story about arriving on the job, getting assigned a group of youth, and being left to their own devices to work some magic.

However recent trends suggest that you are increasingly likely to hear a different kind of story. One characterized by more intentionality, more pre-service orientation, and more on-the-job coaching and support.

With the popularity of OST supports growing and concerns about the quality of programs front and center in policy debates[1], capacity building must remain a high priority for the field. Supervisors are a logical, cost-efficient target population. They turnover less frequently than frontline staff, they are more likely to be employed full-time, and building their supervision skills should net the additional benefit of developing the frontline staff they work with.

Supervision does appear to be getting some well-deserved attention in the field. Several entities have articulated supervisor competencies[2], director credentials are being piloted, and professional development strategies that involve coaching and performance assessment are becoming increasingly popular. We are poised to learn a lot in the coming years about how to strengthen on-the-job supports for youth workers in ways that improve practice and reduce turnover. This is a very positive development given the important

You say supervisor... I say manager

Many OST programs use the terms **supervisor** and **supervision** to refer to staff support, drawing on the social work tradition. Others use **supervision** to refer to how staff members interact with youth, and may subsume staff support under the broader term **management**.

Here, we use supervision to refer to *guidance, feedback and knowledge provided to staff, particularly those working at the "point of service," in order to achieve better outcomes for youth*.

This definition is based on the work of the Youth Development Institute.

relationships between what managers do, what frontline staff members do, and what children and youth experience in programs.

> When we compared satisfied youth workers with their dissatisfied peers, only one significant difference emerged in their profiles: satisfied workers were more likely to report getting the feedback they needed to do their job.

The importance of effective staff supervision, and in particular, of receiving regular feedback about one's work was driven home for the Forum in 2005 when we surveyed over 1,100 frontline staff in school and community-based OST programs nationwide. When we compared satisfied youth workers with their dissatisfied peers, only one significant difference emerged in their profiles: satisfied workers were more likely to report getting the feedback they needed to do their job.[3] Recent research demonstrating that a continuous quality improvement strategy can influence manager practices and as a result, improve the instructional practices of staff, underscores the critical role that supervision plays in influencing program quality and ultimately, program outcomes.[4]

Though most of us know from our own experience how important supervision can be, not much research in the OST field has shed light on effective supervision or management. And while the importance of organizational leadership is often discussed in OST practice and policy circles, the emphasis is often on things like administration, resource development, advocacy and partnership building rather than supervising and supporting staff. This stems in part from a disconnect, not unique to the OST sector, between administrative and programmatic systems or functions within organizations.

Core Competencies for Supervisors of Youth Work Professionals

Both the New York City Department of Youth & Community Development and the Mott Foundation have engaged practitioners and other stakeholders in the development of supervisor competencies in recent years. Their lists are not identical, but include a fair amount of overlap. Competencies that appear on both lists include:

- Ability to adopt a systematic approach to ensure all staff consistently embrace positive child and youth development practices.

- Ability to articulate within the organization and to external stakeholders the program's mission and goals, and how activities align to them.

- Ability to manage program staff and promote professional growth and development.

- Ability to engage, and support afterschool staff in implementing program activities to achieve program goals.

- Ability to gather and review program data for timely program improvement.

To review either framework, go to:

http://www.afterschoolprofessional.info/images/Mott _ CC _ web.pdf

http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/resources/developing _ youth _ workers.shtml

The Beacons Model

Operated by community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) in public schools, the Beacons reflect an integrated commitment to the healthy social and emotional development of youth and families, with activities that meet local community needs and interests including civic engagement, academic enhancement, career awareness, leadership, life skills, health and fitness, and culture and arts.

In New York City, 44 CBOs currently operate 80 Beacon Centers across the city's neighborhoods. Primary funding comes from the City's Department of Youth and Community Development.

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) has played a key role in supporting the Beacons since their inception. YDI also supports a national network of Beacons in several cities around the country, including San Francisco, Minneapolis, Denver, and Philadelphia, Oakland, Savannah, and Palm Beach County.

Learning from Education and Human Services.
Reform strategies come and go, especially in education. One simple but powerful idea that emerged in the 1980s and has had staying power in education is shifting the role of the principal from administrator to instructional leader. One lesson learned from over two decades of inconsistent attempts to implement this idea is that this shift is only possible when the administrative and programmatic aspects of organizations are more tightly coupled, such that management practices explicitly support the delivery of high quality services.

Strengthening supervisory practices is a key strategy in current efforts to reform the child welfare system as well. In social services circles,

the discussion tends to be about shifting the focus of system leaders from managing current systems to leading change. Much like principals and other leaders in the education context, the emphasis is on child welfare supervisors defining what good practices look like and then using data and clinical supervision to help their staff align with that vision.[5]

Closer to Home. While it is always useful to try to learn from related fields like education and child welfare, we need not look far to find insights into effective supervision. First established in the early 1990s, there are now 80 Beacons Centers in New York City and a loose network of replication efforts around the country. The Beacons offer valuable insights into what effective supervision looks and feels like.

The Beacons Young Adolescent (BYA) initiative is a four-year effort led by the Youth Development Institute (YDI) in New York City and funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies. The goal of the BYA initiative is to improve outcomes for young adolescents (ages 9-14) by increasing their participation, engagement and retention in high quality activities at the Beacons centers.[6] Though not its singular focus, strengthening supervisory practices has emerged as a key strategy in this capacity building effort. According to Denice Williams, deputy commissioner for capacity building at the Department of Youth and Community Development which funds the Beacons, "From a systems point of view, supervisors are the key leverage point for the quality improvements we want to see happen in programs."

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>
> Denice Williams, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

Strengthening Supervision through Training

To respond directly to the needs of organizations, the Youth Development Institute has developed several training modules for Beacon Centers to boost supervisor competencies. The five modules relate to different aspects of supervision:

Running effective staff meetings
Designing meetings that balance collective learning and housekeeping; leading reflection; managing a learning community; and engaging staff in program development.

Designing individual supervision meetings
Supporting self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and playing the multiple roles of supervisor: teacher, administrator, counselor and mentor.

Using staff evaluations as a means of reflection, teaching, and continuous improvement
Improving the use of staff evaluations to support staff development and continuous program improvement.

Conducting in-house trainings
Strengthening supervisor capacity to train staff, assess professional development needs.

Using data to inform programming
Helping supervisors understand and effectively use data for program improvement, including sharing data with staff and involving staff and youth in creating improvement plans.

Strengthening supervision may be cost-effective, but it is still a cost that has to be budgeted and prioritized. Examples of promising practice are nice. Competency-based training is necessary. But neither is sufficient. It takes resources and capacity for organizations to take supervision seriously and to implement the kinds of strategies used in Beacons and other quality programs around the country. As Sarah Zeller-Berkman of YDI put it, "The vast majority of these organizations *want* to focus more time and energy on supervision, but they are limited by their budgets to focusing primarily on direct-service."

In this issue. The remainder of this issue takes readers inside of the world of the Beacons. In ***On the Ground*** we try to bring principles of good supervision to life by describing a typical staff member's week. In ***Voices from the Field*** we feature a conversation with Sarah Zeller-Berkman about the work that the Youth Development Institute is doing to strengthen supervision within Beacons. In ***Research Update*** we summarize findings from two studies that have implications for improving supervision within the field – the third year evaluation of the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative and the Youth Program Quality Intervention Impact Study.

On the Ground

Elevating the importance of supervision within the Beacons and strengthening practice in this area has been one of YDI's capacity building goals for the entire network over the past several years. For the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative, aimed at increasing participation rates of middle school youth, strengthening supervisory practices has been a key strategy.

The emphasis on supervision within the Beacons is not just about making sure programs run smoothly, though that is certainly one benefit of paying attention to this and other management practices.

> In essence, one learns to supervise well by being supervised well. One learn to lead a group well by being in a group that is led well.

Shira Sameroff, Center for Family Life in New York City

It is about linking all staff efforts to program quality and building in the kinds of incentives and supports that compel staff to stay. A key principle underlying this commitment that surfaces again and again talking with those involved in Beacons is the importance of supervisors modeling with staff the kinds of interactions and behaviors they want staff to in turn demonstrate with youth. Shira Sameroff from the Center for Family Life in New York City puts it this way: "In essence, one learns to supervise well by being supervised well. One learns to lead a group well by being in a group that is led well."

A Week in the Life. In an attempt to describe what it really feels like to experience strong supervision in an OST program, we describe a typical week for "Patricia," a group leader at a fictional Beacon center. This is a composite based on interviews and reports from staff at the Center for Family Life Beacon in New York City and the YMCA Anne Sullivan/Anishinabe Beacon Center of Minneapolis. We also talked with intermediary staff in both cities who work with these centers. While nominated as strong examples, the supervisory practices underway at these two centers are representative of strategies being promoted and supported nationally across the Beacon network.

Monday. Patricia is finishing her preparations for the programming that she and five program assistants will facilitate that afternoon with the 80 or so middle schoolers enrolled in the program. An hour before the youth arrive, she has two brief check-ins, one with the program team mentioned above, to ensure the rooms and materials are ready to go, and another with her supervisor, the program director, to touch base on what's going on that week. In that conversation, Patricia reminds her supervisor of a special activity they have planned for later in the week which requires a different space. He tells her it's already been cleared with the building principal but that he'll confirm the plans during his meeting with the principal the next day.

Today, Patricia's supervisor will also join the activities, filling in for a program assistant who is absent that day. This "substitution" is smooth for all. Both the Center director (his boss) and the program director intentionally interact with youth participants on a daily basis, and they know them all by name. It is important to the program director that he participate in the program regularly enough that young people aren't distracted when he walks in. "Nobody looks up when I walk in the room," he jokes. This level of involvement gives them ample experience being "on the ground" with their staff and enables them to provide more concrete feedback and support.

Tuesday. Patricia has her one-on-one supervision meeting today. A key aspect of these regular weekly meetings is helping Patricia learn how to *use* supervision well: How to ask the right questions to do her job well, how to ask for help with specific issues, and figuring out how to articulate and advance her own professional goals. "My supervisor will ask me questions to get me thinking about whether there's another way to do things. Or if I'm not sure I did something right, I can go to him and he can give me his feedback. So it is very helpful," Patricia states.

The program director augments weekly supervision meetings with tangible daily support during program sessions, making sure each program leader and assistant has what they need as things get underway, and then making the rounds to actively participate in and observe staff-led activities.

> This commitment to ensuring that everyone – no matter where they sit in the organization – gets regular, consistent feedback and supervision is central to the success of the Center.

Picking a group to join each day for some period of time, he intentionally observes how activities are unfolding – was there an engaging opening activity? How were youth involved in shaping what was going on? Were there opportunities for reflection built in? Patricia's supervisor will often jot down some notes about things he's seen Patricia and her team do particularly well and areas for further development. These notes might be brought into their one-on-one meeting the following week; they may serve as fodder for training down the road; or he may ask Patricia to share an effective strategy with other staff during the next staff meeting.

Supervisors get support too. Patricia's supervisor has biweekly meetings with other senior program staff, gaining ideas about how to support staff and wrestle with programming dilemmas. Senior staff meets frequently to connect, support each other, and report on progress. "Directors get together to share our struggles and challenges," notes one program director. "Everyone needs support, to feel connected and invested, and to feel like it's worth all the hard work. It helps us feel part of a community." This commitment to ensuring that everyone – no matter where they sit in the organization – gets regular, consistent feedback and supervision is central to the success of the Center.

Wednesday is a day when a wide variety of meetings may take place. Senior full-time staff meets with group leaders; group leaders, in turn, meet with assistant group leaders, and they both meet with the youth participants in their groups. A larger program staff meeting, involving all levels of the organization, is also scheduled.

Not limited to a series of administrative announcements, the full staff engages in substantive problem-solving during weekly staff meetings. Today, staff discusses the various ways in which they feel they are being tested by participants. On Patricia's suggestion, one of her assistant leaders mentions an interaction earlier in the week that they felt did not go well. The staff member asks for feedback about how she could have better handled a conflict she had with a student who made a call during session and refused to put away her cell phone.

The program director asks the group to reflect on what can be learned from the episode. In the process, the conflict is reframed as a positive youth development issue; staff are given an impromptu mini-training focused on strategies for managing groups in ways that minimize the potential for similar conflicts; the staff member receives personal support as others acknowledge that things don't always go as planned for them either; and everyone is reminded that some youth may be reacting to the recent abrupt departure of a staff member.

The group aspect of staff meetings and group work in general are considered essential, allowing for peer mentoring and for feedback to happen in all directions. It builds a sense of shared strategy and purpose among staff, gives time to report on program progress, and provides an opportunity for everyone to hear reinforcement of the Beacons approach to positive youth development.

Thursday. Patricia is preparing for her group session. In addition to the planned activities, today she is facilitating a weekly community meeting with participants in her group, where participants discuss

> Not limited to a series of administrative announcements, the full staff engages in substantive problem-solving during weekly staff meetings.

how things are going. During this session, the young people give staff feedback about a presenter that came in to talk about healthy eating habits, and together they brainstorm ideas for a spring field trip. The Beacons' commitment to 360 degree feedback – from participants, co-workers and supervisors – is a core aspect of the full supervision strategy which creates a series of feedback loops that cut across levels of the organization.

Friday. As the week winds down, Patricia and many of her colleagues have the opportunity to participate in a professional development workshop called "Ages and Stages" that provides useful information about how to select and plan age-appropriate activities. The workshop is part of a four-part series that aligns with specific improvement areas that staff identified after a recent quality assessment process. Monthly workshops are just one piece of a commitment to retain and develop staff from within, in a field known for its high-turnover and low pay. Patricia feels this commitment, having started out as a participant at this Center and now having worked there for six years, first as a program assistant and now as group leader.

From principles to practices. This vignette includes several practices implemented at the Center for Family Life and YMCA Ann Sullivan/Anishinabe Beacons, as well as many other centers across the country. These practices include:

- Regular one-on-one supervisory meetings focused on mentoring and professional development.

- Overlapping staff meetings that foster communication across and between different levels of staff.

- Observation and feedback based on a consistent youth development rubric.

- Use of the social group work method to guide staff and participant meetings.

Social Group Work Methodology

With its roots in social work, social group work theory helps youth workers organize individuals within groups, groups within programs and all of these within a larger community. Social group work theory guides program development and implementation by helping staff intentionally design or select activities that meet the needs of a group at each stage in the life of that group. Understanding what needs to happen at each stage of group development also helps the group leader manage their changing role.

"The social group work methodology allows us to go beyond individual development to give young people an opportunity to see and understand themselves as contributors in relation to larger entities in increasingly concentric circles: first the group, then the Beacon program, and eventually the larger community."

– Helene Onesrud, Beacon Director, Center for Family Life, New York

- Regularly soliciting staff and participant feedback using youth development principles (e.g., safety, opportunities to contribute) to guide interactions.

- Strong agency commitment to mentoring, developing and retaining staff.

Ensuring the implementation of practices like these requires more than a philosophical commitment to quality supervision. High expectations and a clear framework for effective practice are coupled with high levels of support. In some Beacon centers, program directors are expected to devote a full 1.5 days per week specifically to supervision. These

A Closer Look at *Quality Matters*

Quality Matters is an assessment and improvement project that provides organizations with information, skills and outside support to improve the quality of their programs. Groups of staff participate in a series of trainings followed by an external assessment at each of their sites using the Youth Program Quality Assessment. Results are used by staff teams and coaches to create an action plan for improvement.

Quality Matters is an initiative of the Youth Work Institute at the University of Minnesota, developed in partnership with the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. For more information, see:

http://www1.extension.umn.edu/youth/training-events/

http://www.cypq.org

hands-on hours are further reinforced by training and other technical assistance opportunities for senior staff who themselves supervise staff but who are also responsible for connecting supervision to larger goals such as program quality and effective recruitment and retention.

In New York, YDI developed a series of trainings for supervisors, with sessions on running effective staff meetings; goal setting in individual supervision; using staff evaluations as a means for reflection, teaching and continuous improvement; conducting in-house trainings; and using data to inform programming. Similar training is offered in Minneapolis, where Beacons and other organizations participate in *Quality Matters*, a quality improvement initiative launched in partnership with the

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University of Minnesota's Minnesota Youth Work Institute. Through this effort, coaches support programs in developing improvement plans based on observational assessments of staff practice. These overall program plans feed directly into supervision plans for individual staff.

Alyson Mohan-Lucas, Beacons Center Director at the YMCA Anne Sullivan/Anishinabe Academy Beacons Center, states, "This is all really about having our staff be connected to the vision. How are we organizing the work with adults in the same way that we want to with young people? The more we model this at the staff level, the more we see it in programs." Jenny Wright Collins who directs the Minneapolis Beacons Network noted the systemic nature of their efforts. "While it may look different at various Beacons sites, the commitment to quality staff and coaching is system-wide. Supervisors are owning this in exciting ways."

Voices from the Field

We talked with Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Director of the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative at the Youth Development Institute in New York, about staff supervision within the Beacons model and her organization's efforts to strengthen it.

Forum: Why do you think supervision should be a priority for Beacons and other OST programs?

Sarah Zeller-Berkman: I think supervision is key for any youth-serving organization because it is intimately connected to quality. The work that

happens at the point-of-service, between adults and youth, needs an infrastructure. It needs support in order to unfold in a way that produces the best outcomes for young people as well as staff in the organization.

Forum: *Describe the approach to supervision that you're helping to strengthen across Beacons.*

Sarah: Our framework acknowledges that supervisors play multiple roles: mentor, teacher, administrator, and counselor. Supervision is about growth and development on many levels. It's not just a higher up saying what you did or didn't do this week. Staff meetings become professional learning communities. There are multiple opportunities for groups of staff to come together to talk about things they want to work on and have a sense that they're being supported to grow as youth workers.

Forum: *What are some specific strategies being implemented and documented within Beacons participating in the initiative?*

Sarah: Some of the strategies being implemented by the various sites in the BYA initiative include allocating a day and a half of a program director's time per week to supervising staff; using social group work methodology (see sidebar) with staff and youth; implementing daily observation/feedback loops with staff; and supervisor self-assessment and planning based on specific competencies.

Forum: *Can you say more about how the Beacons are using supervisor competencies?*

Sarah: A few years ago the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) brought practitioners, researchers, and intermediaries together in a very participatory process to develop youth worker competencies. In working on those it became clear that supervision was key, so they started working on supervisor competencies. In DYCD's thinking and work with Beacons and other

programs they fund, they are acknowledging how important the supervisor is to youth development work happening well and encouraging programs to take it seriously.

Forum: *That's great. In addition to competencies, what else is being done at the system level?*

Sarah: We still need to go further from a policy perspective. For example, not every Beacon professional goes through the course on social group work methodology that the Center for Family Life developed, or similar trainings about how to support individual development in the group context. And resources aren't explicitly dedicated to organizations to support supervision. So there's still work to be done to link the competencies with the resource issue. It takes a lot of time and work, and has to be supported by the organizational directors. But there is increasing awareness – for us, for Beacons staff in the field, and at DYCD that supervision is really important.

Forum: *Have you or Beacon directors seen relationships between intensity of supervision and staff turnover rates?*

Sarah: Yes, though I think the word intensity needs to be coupled with quality. You can have someone sit in a not-so-great supervisory session for an hour and not get much out of it. The sites that have quality supervision happening and are dedicating time to it, have lower staff turnover. When supervisors are not just monitoring what's going on but are truly invested in the development of their staff, it's not surprising that impacts turnover.

Now as a field, I think there are several other important things that impact staff turnover, like what we're offering in terms of benefits, or growth opportunities in the field. So I'm not saying this is the only thing that will make a difference. But I do see less frequent turnover in organizations

where staff feel supported in their personal and professional development.

> We have a clear vision of what these connections are, but we need to get to the point of being able to say this level of investment, in this type of supervision, leads to this kind of impact on point of service quality and staff retention.

Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Director of the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative

Research Update

Our conversation with Zeller-Berkman closed with her articulating an agenda for the OST research community. "We have a clear vision of what these connections are, but we need to get to the point of being able to say this level of investment, in this type of supervision, leads to this kind of impact on point of service quality and staff retention."

YDI is moving in this direction with their Beacons work. An interim evaluation report from OMG Center for Collaborative Learning documents the progress of the initiative at three levels: youth participation rates, programming, and organizational capacity. While there is no way to parse the effects, they found improvements in all three.

- *Youth participation rates:* Enrollment increased overall for all New York City Beacons, including an 18% increase for a sub-set of three targeted for improvement. Attendance also improved for all New York City Beacons, and began to improve in San Francisco (there is an intentional lag time of nearly a year between the two BYA efforts). Attendance increased by 35% in New York, with the average total attendance for targeted youth at 236 hours

across all NY sites. The percentage of students with consistent attendance doubled over the past year to 36%.

- *Programming:* Program offerings have become more intentional and targeted to meet the needs of early adolescents. For example, some Centers have aligned programming around specific themes, expanded the number of choices available, introduced "girls-only" programming, or extended the amount of time spent in specific activities.

- *Organizational capacity.* The promising developments described above have evolved out intentional organizational capacity building in at least two areas: outcomes-based planning and staff supervision. YDI implemented targeted training in these areas during the initiative and provided a range of opportunities for sites to document and reflect on their practices with peers in the network. Evaluators found through interviews, site visits and document review, "substantial evidence that the Beacons applied the training to definite practice changes at their sites." Specific changes reported by Beacons directors in the area of supervision include introducing regular one-on-one meetings, broadening participation in trainings to all employees within the organization, changing the structure and content of staff meetings, and involving staff more deeply in programming planning and decision-making.

Determining the impact or cost-effectiveness of specific organizational improvements in supervision on things like staff turnover or program quality is difficult, especially in the context of a broader program evaluation. Studies have to be designed specifically to answer these questions. Fortunately, this is beginning to happen.

The Youth Program Quality Intervention builds the capacity of managers to implement continuous improvement strategies and as a result, improve

staff instruction or "point-of-service quality" in OST programs. Managers are trained in the assessment process and in interpreting data with staff, developing action plans, and building a culture of continuous improvement. They then engage their staff in assessment, planning, and youth development training, with some on-site technical assistance.

The YPQI study rigorously tested whether new management practices indeed took root and whether changes in these management behaviors led to changes in the practices of frontline staff, the key to quality programming. The answers? Yes and yes.[7] Managers and staff in the treatment group were significantly more likely than those in control sites to implement continuous improvement practices, and staff in the treatment group delivered higher quality performances than those in the control group following participation in the YPQI. Importantly, front-line staff engagement in continuous improvement practices (self-assessment, planning with data, selecting professional development, receiving coaching from mangers) was the critical mediator in the chain of effects leading to improved instruction.

Conclusion

Over a decade ago, the Advancing Youth Development Supervisors Curriculum was developed because the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work recognized that training youth workers in the positive youth development approach would likely prove ineffectual without targeted support for supervisors and outreach to agency leaders.

But as noted in the introduction and hopefully reinforced by the Beacons examples, training alone is not the answer. Training may increase supervisors' capacity, but without clear organizational signals, structures and resources, their motivation to provide frontline staff with the supports needed to grow and succeed in their jobs will wane. Let's hope that systemic commitments such as those being made by

the Beacons combined with targeted research about what works, how, and under what conditions, will get us to a point where youth workers who recall their first days on the job as "sink or swim" will be the exception, not the norm.

Endnotes

1   Secretary Arne Duncan's speech at the Harlem Children's Zone Fall Conference in November 2009 touched on the quality of out-of-school time programming. A transcript of this speech can be found at: http://www2.ed.gov.news.speeches/2009/11/11102009.html.

2   C.S. Mott Foundation. (2009). *Core competencies for afterschool educators.* Flint, Michigan: C.S. Mott Foundation. Retrieved at: http://www.afterschoolprofessional.info/ on January 28, 2009.

3   Yohalem, N., Pittman, K., & Moore, D. (2006). *Growing the Next Generation of Youth Work Professionals: Workforce Opportunities and Challenges.* Houston, Texas: Cornerstones for Kids. The report can be downloaded at: http://cornerstones4kids.org/reports.htm#anchor4.

4   Center for Youth Program Quality (2009). *Youth program quality intervention technical report*. Ypsilanti, Michigan: Center for Youth Program Quality. For more information, visit the Center's website at: http://www.cypq.org.

5   The National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) has developed a set of training and technical assistance resources related to the Child and Family Services Review Process. These resources are featured and can be found at: http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/cfsrta.htm.

6   For more information on the Beacons Afterschool Initiative, visit the Youth Development Institute's site at: http://www.ydinstitute.org/initiatives/beacons/index.html.

7   Additional analyses concerning staff retention and child outcomes are underway. For information about the study and forthcoming reports, see http://www.cypq.org/products _ and _ services/research.

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME
POLICY COMMENTARY**

Shining a Light on Supervision: Lessons from the Beacons

the forum
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

FEBRUARY 2010

In this commentary, we take readers inside the world of the Beacons, to understand their approach to supervision. We feature a "week in the life" of a Beacons staff member, chronicling how supervision unfolds in a typical center. We also hear the perspective of Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Director of the Beacons National Strategy Initiative, about the Beacons' efforts to bring the principles of good supervision to the foreground and their work to provide managers the resources they need to supervise well. Finally, we summarize findings from two studies that have implications for improving supervision within the field – the third year evaluation of the Beacons Young Adolescent initiative and the Youth Program Quality Intervention Study.

> What does good supervision of youth work professionals look like? How can we strengthen supervision in ways that improve practice and reduce turnover? What is the effect of high-quality supervision on programs' bottom line – youth participation and retention rates, program quality and organizational capacity?