

BIOGRAPHICAL TIMELINES

What you need to know

A Biographical Timeline is a very powerful process by which we can improve our understanding of an individual by learning about his/her history. It allows us to discover past experiences that may be influencing how the person currently interacts with and responds to his/her world and the people in it. It encourages us to shift our thinking from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

During the Biographical Timeline Process the team will explore:

- ◆ FACTS — what happened, when did it happen
- ◆ FEELINGS — how the person may have felt when certain events occurred
- ◆ LESSONS LEARNED — how the person’s experience may have informed what they think about themselves, their relationships, and life in general

As you prepare for the Biographical Timeline (BT) process, it will be helpful to have an awareness of the steps involved:

1. Upon request for a BT, one of the HCQU facilitators will contact the point person (usually the Supports Coordinator) to set up an initial meeting with representatives from each faction of the person’s life (family, residential, day program, etc.), if possible. This meeting usually lasts 1½ to 2 hours. During that time, we will discuss:
 - ◆ The power of the BT and what we hope to learn
 - ◆ Additional supporters — both past and present — who could contribute to and/or benefit from participation in the process. Direct Support Professionals are a must! Working directly with the person on a daily basis means they stand to benefit most from an improved understanding of the person.
 - ◆ Sources of information (ex. school records, hospitalizations, previous providers, etc.) and who is responsible for accessing (and ultimately presenting) those records to inform the BT process.
 - ◆ The logistics of the BT (ex. room requirements, time frame, etc.)
 - ◆ Available dates to begin the facilitation (we typically allow at least four weeks, as it often takes awhile to procure releases and access archival records from various sources).
2. A BT is a time-consuming, intensive process. HCQU staff will facilitate the compilation of the information gathered by the team. This usually takes about 10-12 hours total (depending on the person’s age and available information), and will be scheduled to meet the needs of the team. We will end with the development of an Action Plan, using what we have learned to guide the next steps.
3. HCQU Facilitators will compile the information into a written document which, on approval, will be kept with the person’s BSU file.
4. The team will meet again to review the draft document for revision and to update the Action Plan.

NOTE: Whether the individual attends the BT is a personal choice; however, he/she should be made aware and give permission for the process to take place.