

## State Change Project Story 1

### **IDPH Bureau of Administration, Licensure and Regulation Re-licensure Visit Wait Time Project**

The Iowa Department of Public Health's Bureau of Administration, Licensure and Regulation monitors approximately 110 substance treatment programs, which include community-based, hospital-based, assessment and evaluation services, drinking drivers' treatment programs, and correctional institutional programs. The bureau also licenses and monitors problem gambling treatment programs in Iowa. Bureau professional staff provides technical assistance to programs in the general areas of clinical services, program administration, and overall compliance with licensure standards. Professional staff also investigates complaints against substance abuse treatment and problem gambling treatment programs by conducting on-site investigations or resolving the issue through the agency's internal grievance procedure.

In 2006, the bureau's staff was reduced by one as one of the licensure reviewers retired. The position was not filled and the bureau's workload was distributed between the two remaining reviewers. Over the next two years, the bureau lost ground in carrying out its visit schedule for agencies that needed re-licensure reviews. The bureau's aim has always been to visit agencies up for relicensure at least 60 days prior to the agency's license expiration date. So, for example, if agency A's license was due to expire on June 1, reviewers' goal was to visit the agency not later than April 1.

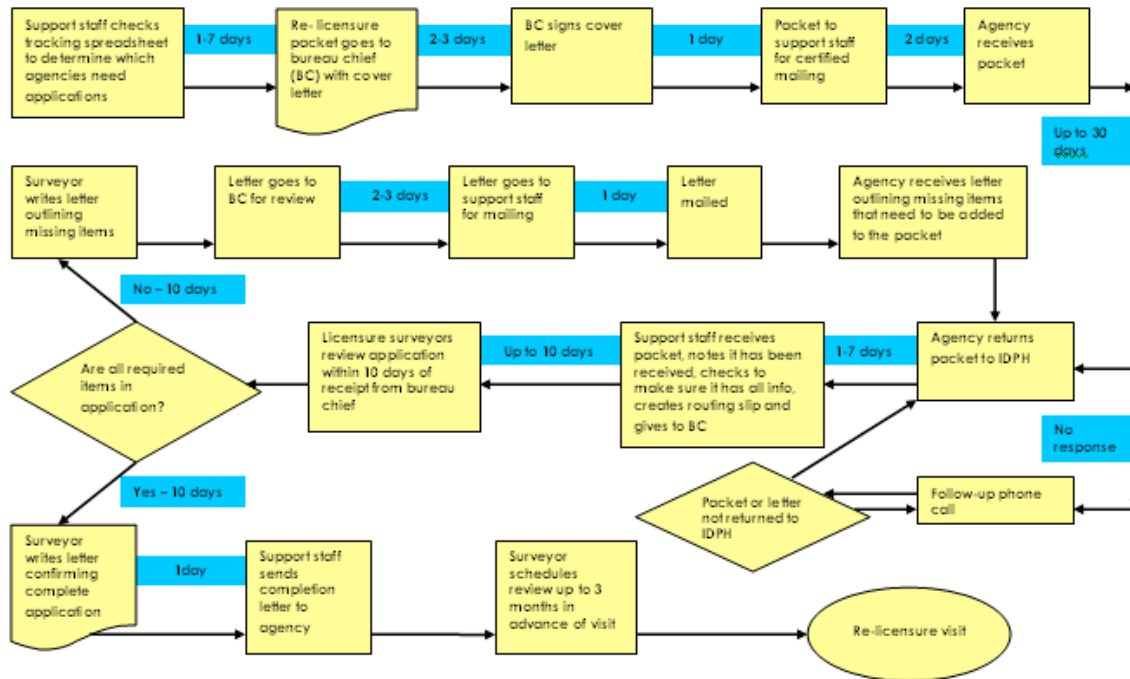
In May of 2008, a check of the review schedule showed that the staff was 213 days behind the 60 day goal; meaning that visits were taking place 153 days after the agency's license expiration. This required the bureau to provide agencies with letters showing that licenses were still valid despite expiration.

It was at this point that the bureau met with the STAR-SI state change leader to discuss a change project the aim of which was to reduce the wait time.

The bureau had already brought back the retired reviewer on a part time basis to help catch up, but this was a short-term solution, as there were no long term plans to add staff. The bureau needed a new approach as the overall wait time for agencies was often dependent upon weather, staff illness, and the number of agencies needing review in any given month.

While at first blush this appears to be a purely data-driven wait time reduction project, the broader picture shows that it has resulted in both paperwork reduction and diffusion of the NIATx process throughout the Division of Behavioral Health.

**Plan:** The bureau staff charted wait times by agency. The average wait time for an agency to have a relicensure review visit was 153 days post-license expiration; 213 days past the bureau's goal of 60 days prior to license expiration. During the course of this project, the change team flow-charted the relicensure paperwork process.



This flowchart illuminated a process bottleneck, one area where the bureau could cut costs and another where the bureau could save significant staff time.

**Do:** The bureau staff had 1) brought back a retired reviewer and 2) placed other job responsibilities on hold in order to get caught up on relicensure responsibilities.

**Study:** The addition of a reviewer in the short term along with the reallocation of staff time resulted in a reduction of the bureau's visit schedule to 83 days prior to expiration; 23 days from the bureau's goal

**Act:** The bureau plans to maintain the current staff time allocation to emphasize relicensure visits and track the visit schedule wait times. But there are two new aspects of this project that will begin shortly. As a result of the bureau's attention to this project, staff has met with IDPH Bureau of Information Management staff and developed a web-based licensure application system that will allow agencies to download their application forms, eliminating up to 14 days from the current process. Implementation of the new system is set for May 1, 2009.

In addition, the bureau has set July 1, 2010 for implementation of a completely web-based licensure application system. This will allow agencies to complete all of the licensure application requirements online. Thus eliminating staff time required to manage licensure paperwork flow within the bureau.

In a related note, since this change project was initiated, both the bureau's chief and one staff person have completed the NIATx Change Leader Academy.