



ISO 9001 Quality Management System Audit Standards

November 2012

Department of Research, Accountability, and Assessment/Data Warehouse

Quality Management System Office

Background and History

To further demonstrate its focus on quality and commitment to excellence, Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) has implemented and maintained a process-based Quality Management System (QMS) consistent with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification standards (9001:2008).

The ISO certification standards are recognized as the most widely implemented quality standards in the world. By achieving registration that the organization has met these standards, BCPS can provide independent evidence of quality assurance to the organization's internal and external customers as well as other educational system stakeholders.

The quality management program was implemented in 2009. Independent auditors completed a rigorous systems review of the QMS in May of 2010 and issued an ISO 9001:2008 certificate to BCPS on June 15, 2010. Over the next two years, four (4) independent surveillance audits were successfully completed and thereby verified continued adherence to the ISO standards.

In April of 2011, the Board of Education also demonstrated its commitment to these efforts by adopting Board of Education Policy 3170, *Quality Management System*. This policy confirmed the board's focus on the importance of improving the quality of the central offices' support of schools and principals.

A critical component of the QMS and the sustainability of the improved quality of central office services and products provided to principals is the performance of periodic and systematic external and internal audits.

External and Internal ISO 9001 Audits - Purpose

External Audits

Although the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) does not certify organizations or issue certificates of compliance, there are numerous third party certification bodies that will perform registration audits. These audits provide independent confirmation that an organization meets the requirements of the ISO 9001 standards. The audits are performed by registrars who must also meet rigorous auditing and training standards before issuing an ISO 9001 certificate.

Internal Audits - ISO 9001:2008 Clause 8.2.2

One of the requirements for achieving certification under the ISO 9001:2008 standards is that the organization

“shall conduct internal audits at planned intervals to determine whether the quality management system

- a) conforms to the planned arrangements, to the requirements of this International Standard, and to the quality management system requirements established by the organization, and*
- b) is effectively implemented and maintained.”*

The records and results of the internal audits are reviewed closely by the external auditors during each onsite visit to ensure that the elements of this standard are being met.

Types of Audits

Typically internal and external audits are conducted using two different approaches

- 1) **Process Audit** – The auditing of a process or system by using the technique of verifying conformance to the required sequential steps from input to output. This involves the verification of process activities against predetermined instructions or standards. It also measures conformance to these standards and the effectiveness of the available instructions to achieve desired results.
- 2) **Checklist Audit** – Checklist audits specify what elements of the quality management system need to be observed, and what levels of performance or adherence are required to comply with the ISO standards or the organizational requirements.

Audits are performed by reviewing documents, interviewing staff, observing process activities, and examining relevant records.

Audits Reports and Findings

Both internal and external audit reports are used to:

- 1) Confirm and provide evidence that the quality management system is working as planned
- 2) identify non-compliance with standards
- 3) identify existing or potential problems
- 4) suggest corrective or preventive actions that could improve the system
- 5) verify that corrective action has been successfully achieved
- 6) provide evidence for review by external auditors who determine whether BCPS has met the ISO quality management standards
- 7) prepare staff for the rigorous external audits that are conducted regularly to demonstrate continued compliance with the ISO standards

The QMS Coordinator reviews all audit reports before sharing them with the department “process owners” and the superintendent’s Management Review Team.

Auditors are trying to find problems with the quality management system, not with the people who are carrying it out. If someone is not carrying out a procedure correctly, it is viewed as a system problem (such as lack of proper training, incomplete documentation, incorrect documentation, etc.). Even if the auditor finds a major nonconformity with the standards, the process owner simply determines the root cause, corrects the finding, and schedules another review to demonstrate evidence that the problem has been resolved and will not recur.

Over the last three years, six external audits and over fifty internal audits have been conducted on the central office departments currently within the scope of the QMS. These audit findings resulted in over one hundred documented corrective action request (CAR) plans to resolve an identified nonconformity or preventive action request (PAR) plans to prevent a potential nonconformity.

Audit Frequency

Once an ISO 9001 certificate has been issued, it can only be maintained by successfully completing periodic external surveillance audits. These audits are usually performed twice each year and are more limited in scope than the original certification audit. After three years, another comprehensive re-certification audit of the entire quality management system must be completed to maintain the ISO certificate.

QMS internal audits are conducted according to a master audit schedule developed annually by the QMS Coordinator. The master schedule identifies a series of planned audits that will ensure that all processes and ISO clauses are audited at least once a year.

Internal Auditors

The BCPS Quality Management System currently uses 13 internal auditors. These individuals are BCPS employees who have completed auditor training provided by an external instructor and/or BCPS. They perform these internal auditing duties in addition to their normal position's duties and responsibilities.

Internal auditors are not experts in the departments that they may be auditing but do have skills to determine compliance with the requirements of the quality management system and the ISO 9001:2008 standards. They do not audit processes within their own departments.