



## GOAL4 IT! Quick Guide

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# GOAL4 IT!™: A quick guide for program leaders, managers, and supervisors

Goal4 It! was created as an alternative to service delivery practices that are heavily compliance-oriented and have limited success helping people make progress toward what they want in work and life. Drawing upon evidence from neuropsychology, behavioral science, and social science research, it aims to activate a person's motivation and commitment to change. Although we designed Goal4 It! to work within public agencies and contracted service providers, we have found that Goal4 It! can work in a variety of settings and with different populations. As of summer 2019, staff and clients in human services and workforce agencies as well as employers across the country are using Goal4 It!.

### How will Goal4 It! benefit the people within my organization?

Goal4 It! focuses on three primary strategies—reduce sources of stress, create supportive and responsive relationships, and build core skills.<sup>2</sup> Prioritizing these strategies creates opportunities to improve programs in the following ways:



#### **Reduce external sources of stress.**

Programs are often subject to cumbersome, bureaucratic processes and paperwork that create stress for both staff and clients with little benefit. As part of implementing Goal4 It!, you will identify ways to streamline existing services and improve efficiency, thereby freeing up staff time to work directly with clients and reducing the burden on both staff and clients. Using this process also creates consistency across staff in serving clients and reduces staff stress by shifting responsibility away from simply identifying and remediating barriers.



#### **Create responsive relationships.** Healthy relationship behaviors and emotional skills are critical to success at work and

home. Creating the conditions for learning and modeling these behaviors and skills is another way that Goal4 It! seeks to improve outcomes. Staff coach, model, and facilitate Goal4 It!, empowering clients and evoking their motivation to change. This enables meaningful interactions that meet clients where they are, rather than focusing on enforcing compliance with program participation targets. In this way, staff can be more responsive to clients by coaching them through the steps to goal achievement.



#### **Build core skills.** Investments in self-regulation and job skills can improve program quality and put clients on

the path to sustainable careers, decreasing their dependence on public assistance. Building skills through direct service interactions promotes lifelong learning that carries beyond the time clients are involved with the program. Goal4 It! provides multiple opportunities for clients (and staff) to practice their self-regulation skills by identifying and prioritizing meaningful goals; creating detailed plans; and reflecting on what went well, what to improve, and the lessons to apply in the future.

### What do I need to implement Goal4 It!?

Implementing and integrating Goal4 It! into your program will require commitment and investment at multiple levels of the organization:

- **Desire to improve the quality of exchanges** between clients and staff to improve family and employment outcomes
- **Engaged leadership** that charts a vision for the program and instills in staff a commitment to sustainable change
- **Program policies, procedures, and culture** that prioritize a staff mindset focused on building self-regulation skills and promoting goal pursuit in the place of transactional, compliance-driven service interactions
- **Active, reflective supervision** that models the Goal4 It! process between supervisors and staff, develops coaching skills and behaviors that support goal achievement among staff, and facilitates professional development

As Goal4 It! rolls out in your organization, you might draw upon analytic techniques to pilot the approach in each of these areas. A [road test](#) can provide a structure for gathering formative feedback about how implementation is going and provide you with action-oriented insights for where to improve.

### What challenges will we encounter and how can we address them?

Transforming programs is a complex and difficult undertaking. You will encounter resistance to change among staff. There will likely be duplications in processes and paperwork. Managing to externally enforced, process-driven performance measures will continue to prove cumbersome. Here are some challenges and fixes to strengthening Goal4 It! implementation, integration, and sustainability.



**The challenge:** Goal4 It! practices and tools duplicate existing processes and paperwork.

**The fix:** Map the existing paperwork and processes to Goal4 It!. When you add something new, find ways to streamline or subtract. Consider replacing existing assessment tools and practices with Stepping Stones to Success, even when it feels as if staff will have less information. Adding a signature line or legal language to My Pathway or My Goal Plan can often satisfy state or county requirements for individual responsibility or employment plans.



**The challenge:** Staff workloads and the length of meetings seem to increase as Goal4 It! rolls out.

**The fix:** Getting up to speed with Goal4 It! can take time, particularly for staff accustomed to transactional client meetings. Frequent practice adhering to the four steps of Goal4 It! can quickly build the skills necessary to effectively facilitate meaningful interactions with clients. As staff and clients acclimate to the new process, coaching sessions will become more focused and often take less time.



**The challenge:** Staff resist change.

**The fix:** Steady and committed leadership, regular and frequent supervision, and staff support groups

are a few strategies that programs can employ to increase buy-in. In addition, road tests can provide structure for ongoing feedback from staff to help shape and improve the implementation of Goal4 It! by addressing pain points and targeting training to the skills that staff most struggle to use.



**The challenge:** Meeting federal performance requirements appears to conflict with Goal4 It!.

**The fix:** Goal4 It! is compatible with meeting the work participation requirements of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, performance measures of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and other federal requirements. By leading with clients' goals, rather than the activities the program requires, staff

can reframe required activities as opportunities to work toward clients' goals and interests. This can actually increase client engagement, helping them meet or exceed program requirements.

## What resources or supports are available to help sustain Goal4 It!?

Mathematica maintains an informal learning community of Goal4 It! users who continue to develop and share promising practices. In collaboration with the dozens of programs implementing Goal4 It!, Mathematica regularly

creates and shares new resources to support sustainability—for example, a practical how to guide for asking meaningful open-ended questions to evoke motivation, or a "Goal Practice Activities" guide for facilitating goal-setting in the context of TANF work activities. By 2020, we will have generated additional guidance for integrating Goal4 It! with career pathways navigation and WIOA programming.

## Endnotes

<sup>2</sup> Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. "Building Core Capabilities for Life: The Science Behind the Skills Adults Need to Succeed in Parenting and in the Workplace." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2016.

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