Ever make mud pies? A hose running rivers in the back-yard sandbox or a collection of buckets and throwaway pie tins lining an oversized puddle after a rainstorm make the best kitchens for such non-culinary fun. How CDI managers must long for those moments when they needn’t worry about how each slice seems to slide back into its larger whole, how the separate ingredients meld and stick.

Sometimes, perhaps, attempting to manage a CDI program can be like making mud pies. So we asked a couple ACDIS members to see how they sliced up their CDI management duties and program priorities to serve up the best pies (ahem, results) possible.

Dee Banet, RN, CCDS, CDIP, director of CDI at Norton Healthcare in Louisville, Kentucky, has two children in college, one getting married in 2017. So, she worries principally after her family and friends. Professionally speaking, with responsibility for the career development and productivity of more than 20 CDI staff members over five facilities—and with most of those staffers new to the profession—Banet has her share of day-to-day concerns. Not surprisingly, hiring and mentoring her new employees tops the list.

Getting the right candidate in the door comes down to understanding the scope of the CDI program and its needs and nuances, Banet says. At Norton, physician education and communication represent core ingredients, as does team collaboration, along with the essential elements of critical and clinical thinking necessary to interrogate the medical record not only for what it contains, but also for which details and diagnoses might be missing.

In the nearly 20 years she’s worked in CDI, Banet has honed an awareness regarding the personality type and professional experience that serve Norton’s program best. “I know the skill set I’m looking for and can see from a candidate’s background and experience how it might enable them to communicate with physicians and transition into the CDI role,” she says.

Once a candidate accepts the position, Banet and her team set to providing the new staff member with comprehensive training specifically geared to that individual and Norton’s needs.

“We developed a strong orientation program, including a home-grown orientation handbook, hands-on educational activities, and mentorships,” Banet says. After six to eight months, new staff also get to attend a CDI Boot Camp.

Although Norton doesn’t currently have career ladders in play, staff training and mentoring continue even after the initial onboarding processes. One method is to have staff, who are anchored to a specific facility, spend time cross-training at other facilities with other staff.