CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT BEST PRACTICES

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and problems and then testing, implementing, learning from and revising solutions.

Effective CQI requires an organizational culture and system that fosters continuous learning and improvement and is routinized in an agency's mission, vision, and organizational practices through an implementation team.[1] Critical to the success of CQI is the inclusion and participation of staff at all levels of the system, as well as program participants, partners, and other relevant collaborators.

What are Best Practices for Continuous Quality Improvement?

- **Empower implementation team to be accountable for CQI** – Have an implementation team to oversee CQI processes. One of the primary benefits of having an Implementation Team is that the team is committed to following CQI processes.[2]

- **Fully support the implementation team** – Implementation teams need time, resources, and authority to complete their CQI activities. Teams also need reliable and accurate data. When organizational leadership empowers the implementation team's CQI efforts, teams can experience higher levels of learning and coordination compared to when teams are not supported to carry out CQI activities.

- **Build CQI activities into regular program routines** – The more integrated CQI is into every area of the organization, the better. For example, whenever possible, collect and use data to drive improvement as part of day-to-day program activities. Encouraging staff buy-in, participation in, and understanding of CQI processes can create a supportive organizational culture for improvement

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[1] Lee, S., Bright, C.L., and Berlin, L.J. (2012). Organizational Influences on Data Use among Child Welfare Workers. *Child Welfare, 92,* 97-116.

[2] Higgins, et al., (2009). Leading Teams of Leaders: What Helps Team Member Learning? *Phi Delta Kappan*, *91*, 41-45.

efforts. Implementation teams should have a regularly scheduled meeting, as well as a process for reviewing key CQI questions and data points and communicating information across the program to support ongoing improvement efforts.

- **Use CQI for data-driven decision-making for the purpose of improvement** – The purpose of an effective CQI system is that decisions are made based on data at every step of the CQI process.[3] Data must be relevant and reliable for interpretation and improvement planning.[4] Additionally, multiple sources and types of data can be useful in the analysis and interpretation of CQI questions.[5] This may include programmatic quantitative data, or qualitative feedback from staff or participants on relevant CQI questions.

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[3] Wulczyn, F., Alpert, L., Orlebeke, B., & Haight, J. (2014). *Principles, Language, and Shared Meaning: Toward a Common Understanding of CQI in Child Welfare.* Chicago: The Center for State Child Welfare Data, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

[4] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (2012). *Continuous Quality Improvement in Title IV-B and IV-E Programs, 8/27/12 (Information Memorandum, ACYF-CB-IM-12-07).* Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/im1207.pdf

[5] Chovil, N. (2009). One Small Step at a Time: Implementing Continuous Quality Improvement in Child and Youth Mental Health Services. *Child and Youth Services, 31,* 21-34.