



Communication Protocol Worksheet

OPRE report #2022-200

Communication is essential to continuous quality improvement (CQI). Implementation teams should have clear protocols that identify everyone with whom the team should communicate (including but not limited to other program teams, policymakers, and community members), the circumstances in which the team should communicate, the type of information that is shared, and specific methods of communication.



Purposes of Communication Protocols

- Intentionally engage key parties (e.g., youth, families, or clients)
- Communicate progress and celebrate success throughout the CQI process
- Report barriers that are preventing or hindering implementation and should be explored and resolved by the team
- Report on actions taken to resolve or address past issues
- Revisit past decisions and agreements periodically to ensure that solutions are still appropriate



Structured Communication Protocols

- A common communication misstep occurs when teams seek feedback from community members but do not share findings with the community.
- Structured communication protocols can help avoid such missteps by documenting how information will flow back to the community.



Best Practices Related to Implementation Team Communication

- Communication should flow in both directions so that information is received and shared. Including and honoring feedback and perspectives from others are key elements of successful communication.
- Teams should communicate at every phase of implementation about what is working, what is not working, and how those conclusions were drawn.
- To be most effective, the implementation team should be responsible for the development and use of the communication protocol(s) and ensure that the team communicates with each person, group, or organization in the communication protocol. For example, your communication protocol could describe how your organization will communicate around key CQI items and also how external partners, policymakers, and community members will be included to ensure that everyone is informed/in the loop.

Below is a worksheet your implementation team can think through when developing your communication protocol(s). Depending on several factors (e.g., how new the team is, how new the relationships are among team members, how cohesive the groups are, how much a common purpose is shared), it may take one or several meetings to develop the first draft of the protocols. After the protocols have been tried a couple of times, the process should be evaluated for how well it works and then adjusted as needed.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL WORKSHEET

These are questions to think about within your implementation team when developing your communication protocol(s).

WHO: Who are the partners that need to communicate (e.g., the implementation team, organization leadership, partnering organizations)? Who is responsible for facilitating communication?	
WHY: What is the communication goal?	
WHAT: What needs to be communicated (e.g., updates, successes, challenges)? What data will be shared in communication? What actions will be expected in response?	
WHEN: How often should communication occur? With what frequency?	
HOW: What method(s) of communication will be used? What communication format will be used? What response is expected and in what format (e.g., we will respond to questions and feedback within two weeks)?	
IMPROVEMENT: What communication barriers are anticipated? What processes can be put in place to avoid these barriers? How will our group assess whether communication is working?	

Thinking through these questions can support efficient and consistent communication for CQI. Revisit this plan periodically to ensure that it is being implemented as intended and stays relevant.

This resource was written by Sarah Avellar (Mathematica) and Liz Pollock (Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE)) based on materials from the University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute - National Implementation Research Network in collaboration with the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and OPRE (contract #HHSP2332009564WC/HHSP23337050T). OPRE Project Officers: Katie Pahigiannis and Pooja Gupta Curtin. Mathematica Project Director: Sarah Avellar.

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