



Focused CQI Services: A Guide for Agencies

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Purpose of Guide

Child welfare agencies—States, territories, counties, Tribes, and/or contracted private agency providers—face challenges in improving the capacity and function of their continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems in order to improve outcomes for the children and families they serve. The Capacity Building Center for States has developed tools, processes, and activities to support these efforts. This guide presents a framework and recommendations for best practices, utilizing the Center for States' resources, for agencies seeking to assess the capacity of their CQI systems, prioritize areas that need attention, and develop and implement actions to bring about meaningful and sustainable improvements.

Center for States' Support for CQI

The Center for States offers a variety of CQI resources, including publications, webinars, and learning experiences. To find more information about the Center's CQI resources, visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/focus-areas/cqi/>.

The Center also offers virtual peer networking to promote best practices in CQI. For more information on the Center's CQI-related constituency groups, including how to join, visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/providing-services/constituency/>.

States and territories also may access Center services tailored to their CQI needs. Tailored services may focus on activities such as implementing a new case review tool, improving or enhancing stakeholder involvement, identifying and addressing data quality issues, or developing CQI skill-building resources for field staff. States and territories interested in tailored services should contact their Center Liaison.

In addition to these offerings, the Center has identified a selection of customizable CQI capacity building services called **Focused CQI Services**, which are concentrated and immediately accessible. Center Liaisons can provide more information about how to access Focused CQI Services. To find your State or Territory Liaison, visit <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/map/>.

Focused CQI Services: Overview of Process and Tools

Agencies can utilize the following tools on their own or in consultation with the Center. Agencies can customize the resources outlined in this guide to meet their needs or available resources. Agencies can download these resources on the Center's website by visiting <https://learn.childwelfare.gov/>.

- 1. CQI Self-Assessment:** A self-assessment process using a comprehensive, research-informed *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* and accompanying *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide*. The CQI self-assessment explores the agency's implementation of best practices in comprehensive CQI systems across seven subdomains:
 - ▶ Leadership Support and Modeling
 - ▶ Staff and Stakeholder Engagement
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Foundational Administrative Structure to Oversee and Implement CQI
 - ▶ Quality Data Collection, Infrastructure, Extraction, Analysis, and Dissemination
 - ▶ Case Record Review Process

- ▶ Application of CQI Findings¹

- 2. Use of Findings and Action Planning:** Agencies use findings from the CQI self-assessment and any prior assessments to develop and implement action plans to improve CQI capacity. The “CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet” (see Appendix C) provides a framework and guidance for developing data-driven action plans.
- 3. Knowledge and Skill Building:** When findings from the CQI self-assessment suggest needs related to building knowledge and skills, agencies may access training resources through one or both of the following:
 - ▶ **CQI Training Academy:** Self-guided e-learning modules that provide foundational training and knowledge in CQI.
 - ▶ **CQI Overview and In-depth Training:** Flexible curriculum modules that address core CQI knowledge and skill areas; delivered by the agency as onsite training.

CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement: The CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Model (identify and understand the problem, research the solution, develop a theory of change, adapt or develop the solution, implement the solution, and monitor and assess the solution) is central to the approach outlined in this guidance and emphasized throughout the implementation of the process (see Appendix C).

Identifying Your Team

Successful implementation of a process to assess and build CQI capacity requires leadership that promotes a CQI culture within the agency, a team of skilled staff to carry out assessment and planning activities, and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

Agency leadership plays a critical role in supporting and promoting efforts to improve and strengthen CQI. Leadership roles in assessing and building CQI capacity include modeling CQI behavior; making the connections between CQI and the agency’s vision, mission, and values; launching or “setting the tone” for this process; securing adequate resources; and engaging community stakeholders in planning for action.

The process of assessing and building CQI capacity will require a team of staff with technical expertise in CQI (most likely the CQI lead and members of the agency’s CQI team) to lead, coordinate, and carry out key activities. Examples of activities include:

- ▶ Coordinating and leading planning meetings
- ▶ Reviewing existing materials and collecting evidence in the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*
- ▶ Designing and conducting interviews or surveys
- ▶ Collaborating on scoring the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*, including optional surveys and/or focus groups
- ▶ Ensuring information is analyzed and presented to the team as user-friendly findings that the team can follow up on as part of the action-planning process

¹ The results of the CQI Self-Assessment Instrument are independent of decisions and negotiations between the Children’s Bureau and the State/territory regarding whether the State/territory meets requirements to use its own case review system for the CFSR or ratings on CQI as a systemic factor.

- ▶ Leading action-planning activities
- ▶ Collaborating on and planning for knowledge and skill building, including customizing training examples using agency data or example reports and facilitating or delivering curriculum, as appropriate

The active participation of staff and stakeholders in assessing and building CQI capacity is essential to impacting an agency’s CQI culture. The Center encourages agencies to engage a broadly representative staff and stakeholder team throughout this process, ideally including agency leadership and child welfare and child protection staff (e.g., program managers, supervisors, and frontline staff), as well as CQI and Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) managers, information technology staff, and data analysts. Agencies also should engage community stakeholders, partners, families, and youth representatives. Examples of staff and stakeholder activities include:

- ▶ Participating in kickoff and planning activities
- ▶ Responding to surveys and/or participating in focus groups
- ▶ Participating in knowledge- and skill-building activities

Getting Started: Key Activities

Initial activities should focus on establishing meaningful engagement with internal and external stakeholders, promoting collaboration and teamwork, and ensuring that the agency has the staff and resources in place to be successful. The Center encourages agencies to schedule a kickoff meeting to signal the initiation of the process. Agencies may decide to convene an internal kickoff meeting, or to engage with the broader staff and stakeholder team, to begin assessing and building the CQI capacity process. In either case, the Center recommends the following activities:

- ▶ **Establish a shared vision and understanding of CQI:** Develop an agenda focused on collaboration and capacity building. This starts with ensuring that team members are open to:
 - Learning from one another about how the agency’s current CQI system operates; challenging existing assumptions; discussing the agency’s CQI background/history; and learning about strengths and areas needing improvement
 - Sharing with one another what they want from the agency’s CQI system, what they would expect if the agency’s CQI system were more effective, and how the agency’s CQI system would be different
 - Sharing with one another what they hope to achieve from going through this process, what they hope will change as a result, and what products, tools, or resources may be needed to affect change
 - Learning from one another what they see as hurdles or barriers, including possible timelines and/or resource constraints
- ▶ **Emphasize the CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement:** Review with team members the “CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet” handout and discuss parallels to assessing and building the CQI capacity process (i.e., the self-assessment is part of the “identify and understand the problem” step of the CQI cycle). Repeat and emphasize this capacity building discussion throughout the process.

- ▶ **Confirm and clarify team responsibilities:** There must be a shared understanding of the level of participation and responsibility associated with team members and the various activities that will take place.
- ▶ **Determine a schedule and logistics for key activities:** Team members will reach agreement on an overall schedule and assignments for implementing the steps and activities for the process. This includes scheduling regular meetings or calls, general timeframes for steps of the self-assessment, and other key dates, such as survey deadlines or interview schedules.
- ▶ **Arrange for access to key CQI-related documents for the self-assessment process:** All team members should share the commitment to ensuring that all documents will be made available for review as part of the self-assessment process. The team should review the “CQI Self-Assessment Potential Sources of Evidence” checklist (see the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide*) for examples of key documents and discuss any other documents that may prove informative to the process.
- ▶ **Provide support, as needed, for staff and stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and surveys:** Team members should agree, early in the process, to being willing and available to participate in interviews, focus groups, or surveys as needed and also to support the participation of other staff or stakeholders in such processes. This ensures that the team fully utilizes all available sources of evidence to inform the self-assessment process.

Available tools for CQI initiation activities:

- ▶ “CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet” handout
- ▶ “CQI Self-Assessment Potential Sources of Evidence” checklist (see *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide*)

CQI Self-Assessment: Overview

The CQI self-assessment phase of the process is designed to assist agencies in gathering and synthesizing evidence in many forms related to CQI functioning at all levels of the agency and among staff and stakeholders. Specifically, the self-assessment includes a thorough review of existing documents and resources, and usually will require the gathering of additional information from staff and stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys.

A key component of the self-assessment process is the use of the evidence-informed *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*. Based on the current understanding of effective CQI best practices, the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* is designed to explore seven subdomains of CQI capacity. Agencies will explore and rate a total of 28 items as part of the self-assessment process. Completion of the instrument is designed to support accurate detection of CQI strengths and capacity building needs that then support productive action planning. The *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide* is available to support the self-assessment and ensure reliable findings. The methodology utilized in the development of the instrument and corresponding rating guide is detailed in Appendix A.

CQI Self-Assessment: Key Activities

- ▶ **Review and analyze existing CQI-related information/data:** The self-assessment process begins with a comprehensive review of existing documents (evidence) as it relates to the agency’s CQI functioning. Team members should work closely together in the review of

documents to ensure that they are accessing the best sources of available information needed to conduct a thorough assessment.

- ▶ **Debrief and analyze preliminary results:** Once the team completes the review of existing documents, it should meet to share and discuss preliminary findings. This also serves as an opportunity to raise and address any questions that may have emerged during the documentation review and to determine if the agency needs additional evidence.
- ▶ **Determine need for and sources of additional evidence through staff and stakeholder focus groups, interviews, or surveys:** The team should determine the need for additional evidence to accurately assess the various items in the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* and the best approach for accessing such information. This may include focus groups or interviews with key personnel and critical stakeholders to obtain additional feedback regarding their impressions and vision for CQI and areas for improvement. The team also may consider surveys to access feedback from larger groups of staff and stakeholders regarding their knowledge and perceptions of CQI.
- ▶ **Prepare for focus groups and/or interviews with staff and stakeholders, as needed:** The team should work together to determine the best approach for meeting with staff and stakeholders (i.e., focus groups versus interviews) and also develop a core set of questions that it can tailor based on participants' roles and responsibilities. The team will identify key staff and stakeholders for interviews or focus groups.
- ▶ **Develop and implement staff/stakeholder surveys, as needed:** The team should work together to develop and disseminate surveys for the identified target population(s). The team will identify the population(s) to be surveyed as well those staff and stakeholders it selects for interviews or focus groups. The agency should be prepared to seek technical expertise, if necessary, to ensure efficacy of the survey execution and also in preparing results.
- ▶ **Conduct focus groups and/or interviews with staff and stakeholders:** Arrange the logistics for the scheduling of interviews and decide who will take the lead in conducting the actual interviews, ensuring that participants are fully oriented as to the purpose, use, and confidential nature of the conversation. The team also will need to share and discuss preliminary findings from the interviews.
- ▶ **Analyze findings:** Synthesize the findings of the self-assessment by completing the rating scores and the narrative assessment portions of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*. The team will go through the following actions as part of the analysis of findings:
 - Debrief and analyze data: Go through all of the data gathered throughout the self-assessment process and conduct an analysis focused on the areas and items reflected in the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*. This will serve as an opportunity to share and discuss differences in perspectives and come to consensus before synthesizing and documenting findings in the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*.
 - Document all assessment findings and complete final ratings using the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* in preparation of action-planning activities: Record all assessment findings in the instrument and while determining ratings for each of the 28 items. Use of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide* will be critical to ensuring the accurate rating of items. This will assist the team in determining areas of strength as well as areas that the team may consider a high-priority area for improvement heading into action-planning activities. The team also should use the summary report feature contained in the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* as a way to further synthesize and prioritize findings.

Available tools for CQI self-assessment activities:

- ▶ *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*
- ▶ *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide*

Using Assessment Findings to Build and Improve CQI Capacity (Action Planning)

Once the CQI self-assessment is completed, and there is agreement on the findings, convene with the staff and stakeholder team to identify top priorities for CQI capacity building and improvement. Understanding and using a systematic process for moving from findings to implementation of strategies for improvement is critical, and the agency can use this as an opportunity to model the CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement by going through the following steps:

1. **Understand the problem:** This step includes building on the assessment findings to do deeper problem exploration; seeking additional information from multiple sources; challenging existing assumptions; and identifying root causes, rather than symptoms, and challenges in implementing strong CQI components.
2. **Research the solution:** This step focuses on searching for evidence-based, evidenced-informed, and/or other possible solutions that address the problem and root causes.
3. **Develop a theory of change (ToC):** This step involves identifying a clear theoretical link between the root causes of the problem and proposed solution(s).
4. **Adapt or develop the solution:** This step includes connecting the research and ToC to determine a solution that fits within the scope and resources available to the agency; determining readiness for implementing a proposed solution; and deciding if the agency will use or adapt an existing solution, or develop a new solution.
5. **Implement the solution:** This step includes identifying specific, measurable plans for implementation; identifying the steps necessary to successfully adapt or develop and implement the desired solution(s), along with the resources/services needed to support these steps; assigning staff and establishing timelines to carry out these steps; developing accountability mechanisms, processes, and outcome measures; and considering needs for developing the dimensions of capacity (resources, infrastructure, knowledge and skills, culture and climate, and engagement and partnership) to more fully support CQI implementation.
6. **Monitor and assess the solution:** This step includes ensuring fidelity; tracking and monitoring implementation and evaluating for results; modifying the solution if necessary; and reporting findings to stakeholders.

At the meeting(s) with staff and stakeholders, the agency should plan to share assessment findings, seek feedback, and work systematically through each step of the CQI cycle to develop an action plan for improvement. This process could take place over one to two meetings. Timelines will depend highly on the amount of interim work needed, such as analyzing additional data or researching solutions, as well as on the amount of resources the agency has committed to these efforts.

The “CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet” in Appendix C provides a framework and guidance for action planning and documenting each step of this work.

Available tools for action-planning activities:

- ▶ *Completed CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*
- ▶ “CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet” (see Appendix C)

CQI Knowledge and Skill Development

A possible outcome of the action-planning process may be that the agency decides that staff and/or stakeholders would benefit from training in CQI knowledge and capacity building before proceeding further in an effort to enhance existing CQI processes and activities. The agency may determine that it needs a general training experience to introduce key staff and/or stakeholders to the overall characteristics and strategies associated with successful CQI systems.

To address these potential needs, the Center has developed a knowledge and skill curriculum designed to meet the needs of an agency for either an overview or indepth CQI training experience that includes the following topics:

- ▶ CQI culture and climate
- ▶ Leading with data
- ▶ Administrative structure
- ▶ Promoting high-quality data from the agency's information system
- ▶ Promoting high-quality data through case reviews, surveys, and interviews
- ▶ Promoting a high-quality data analysis process
- ▶ Engaging the child welfare agency community

The agency will decide any training needs and select specific onsite training curricula as a result of the assessment and action-planning process. Agencies choosing to participate in the onsite training should first review the online CQI Training Academy modules available at <https://learn.childwelfare.gov/>.

Coaching also is available upon request through tailored services to assist agencies in applying what they learned through training to a specific CQI project.

Next Steps and Additional Services

The Center offers consultation related to the CQI self-assessment, action planning, and knowledge and skill building. Agencies that identify areas of capacity building that call for additional consultation or service provision can contact their Center Liaison for assistance by visiting <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/map/>.

Appendix A

CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Scale Development Methodology and Psychometrics

The leadership team charged with the development of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* (2016) followed a systematic process that aligned with rigorous processes of scale development and validation as defined by leading authors (DeVellis, 2012; Furr & Bacharach, 2014; Netemeyer, Bearden, & Sharma, 2003).

Construct Identification

The *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* was designed to measure the implementation and use of best practices within public (States, counties, and territories) child welfare agencies' continuous quality improvement (CQI) systems. Within this broad construct of "implementation and use of best practices" in CQI systems, the leadership team identified seven subdomains based on the Children's Bureau's (CB's) [CQI Information Memorandum](#),² the process included in the CQI Training Academy³ and additional literature, as cited in the selected reference list. The seven subdomains were:

- ▶ Leadership Support and Modeling
- ▶ Staff and Stakeholder Engagement
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Foundational Administrative Structure to Oversee and Implement CQI
- ▶ Quality Data Collection, Infrastructure, Extraction, Analysis, and Dissemination
- ▶ Case Record Review Process
- ▶ Application of CQI Findings

The *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* also was designed to help public child welfare agencies improve their CQI systems by supporting an understanding of the current status and creating a vision of best CQI practices.

² Administration for Children and Families. (2012). *Continuous quality improvement in title IV-B and IV-E programs (Information Memorandum No. ACYF-CB-IM-12-07)*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/im1207>

³ Children's Bureau. (2014, June). *Spotlight on child and family services reviews: Child welfare CQI academy*. *Children's Bureau Express*, 15(6). Retrieved from <https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=158§ionid=2&articleid=4229>

Item Development by Expert Panel

To develop the item pool, a team of experts was assembled that included former directors of child welfare with expertise in performance improvement principles; former directors of CQI systems, including one with previous experience in designing a State CQI assessment; current public child welfare researchers engaged in data management and analysis; persons with expertise in data information systems; and a researcher with expertise in measurement design and CQI. Additionally, members of CB and the Capacity Building Center for States participated in reviewing items and setting the direction and tone of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument's* development. To coordinate efforts, the assessment development team met internally at least weekly and weekly with the broader CB and Center for States' staff.

This expert panel generated the initial item pool focusing on the panel's area of expertise. As is common in measurement design, the initial item pool was very large, with 106 items, and growing, that represented best practices. At this juncture and based on the understanding that public agencies vary in implementation, the leadership and development team identified 28 items that represented a broader subdomain level. The team further defined the final 28 items into subitems that more fully explained the item.

The team designated one person to edit the entire document, identify and resolve redundancies in the items, and enhance the consistency of the language. The development team worded all of the items in the positive direction so that higher ratings indicate higher levels of implementation and use of best practices. The team measured the final reading level of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* at the grade level of 14.6 using Microsoft Word software diagnostics.

Rating Scale and Scoring Rational

Each of the 28 items of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* was designed to highlight an essential best practice of CQI while recognizing that agencies may implement the practice differently. Consequently, the broadly written 28 items were not amenable to dichotomous ratings of either "present" or "absent" that are too constrained to explore best practices present in an agency. The development team chose a four-point rating scale to measure the implementation status and use of best practices as follows: "Excellent" (4), "Good" (3), "Emerging/Developing Capacity" (2), and "Minimal/Not Present Capacity" (1). The four-point rating scale will support both an understanding of current status and promote incremental improvement of the agencies' CQI system.

Content Validity

The rigorous process, expert panel for item pool development, review by numerous stakeholders, and frequent revisions to the document based on feedback supports the content validity of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*. Because CQI best practice strategies are complex, the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide* includes additional details describing best practices.

Piloting of the CQI Self-Assessment Instrument

During the development of the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*, the expert panel formally and informally applied its knowledge of various States to simulate application of the instrument. This knowledge and

simulated piloting contributed to understanding and improving the wording of items, the scaling, and potential reporting formats.

Reliability Considerations

The *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* is designed for States to self-evaluate their performance with or without the support of a consultant from the Center for States. To support this process and foster interrater reliability, a detailed *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Rating Guide* is available.

Future Directions

As States use the *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument*, additional information will become available about interrater reliability. Ideally, use of the instrument will promote consensus on the status of implementation of CQI best practices in the public child welfare agency. This is yet to be determined; other questions currently are unanswered. The *CQI Self-Assessment Instrument* also should be sensitive to change. Can public child welfare agencies, as well as private agency providers, use the instrument successfully to gauge improvements in their system? The conceptualization of best practices in child welfare CQI systems borrows from literature in many related fields; are there additional or different practices that may work better in public child welfare? If CQI best practices are implemented at a higher level, the public child welfare agencies' results also should improve. Will agencies see improvement in important outcomes with enhanced CQI systems?

References

- DeVellis, R. F. (2012). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (3rd ed.). Applied social research methods series. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Furr, M. R., & Bacharach, V. R. (2014). *Psychometrics: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Netemeyer, R. G., Bearden, W. O., & Sharma, S. (2003). *Scaling procedures: Issues and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix B

CQI Self-Assessment Instrument Item Summary

Leadership Support and Modeling

1. Leadership sets clear expectations for the use of evidence throughout the continuous quality improvement (CQI) process.
2. The agency is organized and prepared to use data appropriately and effectively.
3. Leadership models CQI behavior inside and outside of the agency.
4. Agency programs and strategies are linked to outcomes by the search for root causes and underlying conditions that explain or hypothesize current performance.
5. Leadership focuses on quality as well as compliance.

Staff and Stakeholder Engagement

6. Staff of all levels of the child welfare system have opportunities to actively participate and assume meaningful roles in all phases of the CQI process.
7. Staff of all levels of the child welfare system are prepared and supported to participate in all phases of the CQI process.
8. The agency provides opportunities for participation and meaningful roles in the CQI process for child, youth, family, and other stakeholder representatives in a manner that is sensitive to their perspectives and vulnerabilities.
9. The agency provides the level of preparation and support necessary to facilitate the roles of child, youth, family, and other stakeholder representatives in the CQI process.

Communication

10. Communication activities align with and support CQI goals.

Foundational Administrative Structure to Oversee and Implement CQI

11. CQI processes and activities are grounded in best practices literature and guided through clearly articulated standards and procedures.
12. The agency executes a written CQI plan that is comprehensive and developed with staff and stakeholder involvement.
13. A teaming structure that supports the active involvement of staff and stakeholders at all levels of the CQI process is operational throughout the agency.
14. The agency has an appropriate level of qualified and trained staff who are expressly dedicated to

overseeing and providing needed support to all CQI processes and activities.

15. Staff receive formal, introductory, ongoing, and specialized training specific to their roles and responsibilities in the agency's CQI process.
16. Staff are afforded access to up-to-date technology and other resources to assist in the use of data/evidence needed to make informed decisions.

Quality Data Collection, Infrastructure, Extraction, Analysis, and Dissemination

17. Comprehensive data collection methodologies and modalities facilitate the ability to gather high-quality data.
18. Data systems promote ease of data entry and data sharing.
19. Comprehensive procedures are in place to promote quality data extraction.
20. The agency possesses or accesses analytical competencies and skills of sufficient sophistication to answer questions about performance and elucidate root causes.
21. Quality data are disseminated broadly and utilized by agency staff and stakeholders.

Case Record Review Process

22. Uniform case record review instruments are utilized to continually and consistently evaluate identified program goals and processes across ALL program areas (i.e., foster care, in home, residential/group, etc.) and throughout the entire agency.
23. Case review tools collect case-specific data that can be aggregated and detect both areas of compliance with best casework practices and the quality of services provided under critical areas of case practice.
24. Written policies, instructions, and quality controls are utilized to effectively guide and support reviewers in the case record review process.
25. Written sampling guidelines are utilized in determining the appropriate number and types of cases to be reviewed.
26. The agency utilizes a well-defined process for selecting and training qualified case record reviewers.
27. Case record review data are routinely aggregated and disseminated in a timely manner.

Application of CQI Findings

28. CQI processes are used to drive systemic change and improve outcomes for children and families.

Appendix C

CQI Cycle of Learning and Improvement Worksheet

Step	Key Considerations	Comment	If Not Known, Record Steps Needed to Address Each Area. Identify Who Needs to Do What by When.	Record Final Answer
<p>1. Identify and understand the problem.</p> <p><i>For related training material, see Unit 3 (“Identifying and Understanding the Problem”) of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	<p>A. What should the agency change based on the CQI self-assessment? (Prioritize based on subdomain and area summaries.)</p>	<p>What outcome will be different when the system works as you think it should?</p>		
	<p>B. How do you measure this phenomenon?</p>	<p>Is this phenomenon measured accurately?</p>		
	<p>C. Once you have agreed on the measure, how much variation do you see across your agency?</p>	<p>Does everyone understand that you are measuring precisely this, and is there agreement and support for the indicators or measures?</p>		
	<p>D. Why is the agency getting the performance that it is seeing? What are the root causes of the problem it wants to address?</p>	<p>Is everyone moving in the same direction (systemic issue)? Is there much variation across managers, supervisors, and workers? In short, does something need to change across the whole agency, or is the issue office-, unit-, or worker-specific? At this point, it does not matter WHY, only what is.</p>		

Step	Key Considerations	Comment	If Not Known, Record Steps Needed to Address Each Area. Identify Who Needs to Do What by When.	Record Final Answer
		<p>It is key to understand why <i>before you decide to change anything</i>. Identify those elements that are within your control and those that are not. Understand the root causes of the problem rather than only the symptoms. You may need multiple sources of information to understand the root causes. Understand how the dimensions of capacity (i.e., resources, infrastructure, knowledge and skills, culture and climate, and engagement and partnership) relate to the problem you want to address.</p>		
<p>2. Research the solution.</p> <p><i>For related training material, see Unit 4 (“Researching Solutions”) of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	<p>A. Compile a description of possible/reasonable solutions for consideration.</p>	<p>Search for evidence-based or evidence-informed solutions. In the absence of evidence-based/informed solutions, identify other possible solutions.</p>		

Step	Key Considerations	Comment	If Not Known, Record Steps Needed to Address Each Area. Identify Who Needs to Do What by When.	Record Final Answer
<p>3. Develop the theory of change (ToC).</p> <p><i>For related training material, see Unit 4 (“Researching Solutions”), Module 2 (“Building a Theory of Change”), of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	<p>A. Identify a clear theoretical link between the root causes of the problem and the identification of a solution.</p>	<p>A ToC states a hypothesis for achieving an outcome intended to address identified problems and the needs of the target population. If you implement a given solution, will it reasonably lead to change in the problem and improved performance?</p>		
	<p>B. Specify steps in the change process that must occur to achieve better outcomes.</p>	<p>A ToC identifies steps that need to be taken to achieve identified outcomes.</p>		
	<p>C. Identify measures for each step in the change process.</p>	<p>These measures will help you know if you are achieving the ToC steps.</p>		
<p>4. Adapt or develop the solution.</p> <p><i>For related training material, see Unit 4 (“Researching Solutions”), Module 3 (“Adapting or Developing Solutions”), of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	<p>A. In light of the agency’s research and ToC, what solution fits within its scope of control and is ready for the agency to take steps to implement? Will the agency need to adapt an existing solution or develop a new solution?</p>	<p>What will you do over how long a period of time to achieve what kind of change? (Specificity is needed.)</p>		

Step	Key Considerations	Comment	If Not Known, Record Steps Needed to Address Each Area. Identify Who Needs to Do What by When.	Record Final Answer
	B. What will you look at to know if you are making a difference/gaining ground?	Be specific and upfront about how you will track progress (process measures, interviews, peer reviews, case readings, etc.). You may benefit from differentiating between measures developed for the ToC, specific implementation benchmarks/measures regarding implementation of the solution, and outcome measures. Note that you might not yet see change in outcomes as these often take a longer time to show change. Again, be specific.		
<p>5. Implement the solution.</p> <p><i>For related training material, see Unit 5 (“Implementing Solutions”) and Unit 7 (“Taking Action to Drive Implementation”) of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	A. Set up a work plan.	Who will do what to whom and when? Who will confirm that it is happening? How often will this be reported? Does the agency have an implementation teaming structure in place to make the work plan happen?		

Step	Key Considerations	Comment	If Not Known, Record Steps Needed to Address Each Area. Identify Who Needs to Do What by When.	Record Final Answer
	B. Address necessary supports/readiness to implement the solution.	Do you need to develop fidelity measures? How will you engage necessary stakeholders? Develop a monitoring plan with baseline performance.		
<p>6. Monitor and assess the solution.</p> <p><i>For related training, see Unit 3 (“Leading With Data”) and Unit 7 (“Data Analysis of the CQI Intensive Training Units”). Also see Unit 6 (“Monitoring and Assessment of Solutions”) of the CQI Training Academy.</i></p>	A. Track relentlessly. (Establish a firm schedule for monitoring, including who participates.)	This should be the subject (at least in part) of every agency meeting at the appropriate level. Managers and supervisors should have a role in including this in relevant discussions with individual workers, etc. What is management’s expectation? Is there fidelity to the solution being implemented?		
	B. Formally report out what you’ve learned.	Tell your staff what you learned: what worked, what did not work, what has changed in your thinking, and what you would like to do next—that is, return to Step 1.		

Appendix D

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