

Continuous Quality Improvement Project

Pennsylvania

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CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

Department Structure

As part of Pennsylvania's federal Program Improvement Plan, the State rolled out a continuous quality improvement effort. While there is no formal CQI Unit in the State, leaders from the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF); the PA Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC); and County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs) are integrally involved in the roll out. The State's CFSR Project Manager is responsible for quality improvement efforts related to the federal CFSR and the internal CQI roll out. This position is located in the State's central office and works in partnership with the CWRC, an entity within the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work that the State has an intergovernmental agreement with to provide a continuum of services designed to support and improve PA's child welfare system. One of CWRC's six departments, the Statewide Quality Improvement Department, includes a project manager position which is responsible for managing the CFSR and CQI effort. CWRC and OCYF also have representatives in each of PA's four regions who are responsible for supporting the regional CQI efforts as counties work to roll them out. All reporting on the CQI effort filters through the State CFSR Manager to the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Bureau of Policy, Programs, and Operations Director. The State began working on a CQI effort prior to its second round CFSR in 2008; however the plan was not formalized until implementation of the State's federal PIP.

The CQI effort does not have its own budget; however any counties interested in joining the CQI effort can apply for funding through the State's Needs-Based Plan and Budget process. Casey Family Programs provides funding for items such as technical assistance, reviewer travel costs, etc. National consultants included: Human Systems and Outcomes, which owns the copyright to the QSR protocol; the Child Welfare Practice and Policy Group, which has provided extensive technical assistance on QSR and Practice Model implementation; and the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) which has provided technical assistance regarding the implementation of the DAPIM™ framework and Practice Model development.

Staff Qualifications and Responsibilities

At the time of hiring for the State’s CFSR Program Manager, the CQI effort had not been as clearly defined; therefore, the position did not include as many CQI-specific job responsibilities. As the State continues to build its capacity for CQI, discussions are continuing around including additional CQI responsibilities as a part of future positions.

Training

There are training opportunities for those in the CQI effort’s leadership roles, including: professional development, technical assistance from national experts, webinars, and participation in [NRCOI’s Peer Network](#).

Committees

During the development of Pennsylvania’s federal PIP, the Sustaining Change Workgroup was created. Made up of approximately 72 stakeholders from around the State, the group first convened in August 2009 and continues to meet on a monthly basis. From this group, several subcommittees and workgroups have emerged to focus on specific aspects of establishing Pennsylvania’s framework for CQI (e.g. developing the QSR protocol for reviews and creating the QSR Manual). The Sustaining Change Workgroup is credited with “keeping it all together for us” and continuing to monitor implementation of the CQI effort. A core group of site leads from around the State have formed a peer network to oversee the implementation of the counties’ CQI process. Bimonthly conference calls are held with site leads for Phase I and Phase II counties to discuss implementation efforts. Site leads from subsequent phases will join the calls as roll-out continues.

CQI PLAN

Expectations, Missions, and Objectives

Pennsylvania’s Quality Service Review Protocol and Quality Service Review Process Manual (linked [here](#)) provide an overview of the CQI process with a focus on the QSR component. The manual was developed by the Sustaining Change Workgroup based on what was learned from the QSR pilot counties. The manual is considered a working document and will be continually changed as each Phase is completed and feedback is provided.

Pennsylvania’s Office of Children, Youth and Families has adopted the [American Public Human Services Association’s \(APHSA\) DAPIM™ model](#) to approach strategic planning. The State describes their system as moving away from compliance and toward a quality improvement focused approach. The DAPIM™ model provides the structure and foundation for CQI efforts in the State. The DAPIM™ model is a structured approach to facilitating change. Within the CQI context, it is used to: facilitate a county through the identification of priority areas for improvement, root cause analysis, and county improvement plan development and monitoring. All of this occurs through local county teams. A leadership team sets the charge and monitors the work of an improvement team, which consists primarily of line staff and supervisors.

The [Quality Service Review Process Manual](#) provides a mission statement for the CQI effort:

Pennsylvania's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) effort is a vehicle that will help drive and sustain positive change of our child/youth and family outcomes. The Quality Service Review (QSR) process is one component of the CQI effort and it will provide the opportunity for an in depth review of the status of a child/youth and family's safety, permanency and well being outcomes as well as an agency's practice performance. The QSR process will allow agencies to gather data and evaluate their progress to better enhance case practice to the benefit of children, youth and families in the Commonwealth.

CQI Policies

Pennsylvania does not have any specific CQI policies. At present, participation in the CQI effort is voluntary for counties; however, a State workgroup, which is currently working on regulations for County Children and Youth Agencies, is considering adding CQI as a necessary component for county agencies in the future.

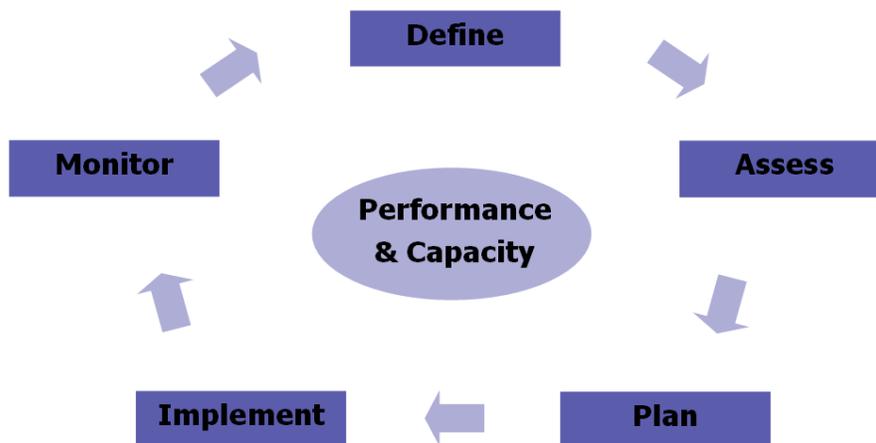
ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

CQI Framework

Implementing change at the local level is critical to the achievement of positive child, youth and family outcomes, particularly in a state-supervised and county-administered state. A well-developed Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process will be a vehicle to drive change forward in Pennsylvania (PA). Continuous quality improvement is not a time limited project or initiative. Casey Family Programs and the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement define continuous quality improvement as "the ongoing process by which an agency makes decisions and evaluates its progress." Pennsylvania's CQI approach is therefore not another new initiative, but an effort to reshape the system at the local and state level to support the achievement of positive outcomes for our children, youth and families. The state will do this by better aligning existing quality improvement efforts to meet county's needs in a more coordinated, connected way. We believe that the CQI process being developed in PA will support staff in improving their practice which will ultimately lead to healthy children, youth and families. The QSR is one critical component of the CQI process that will be used to assess and monitor progress which is further defined below.

Pennsylvania's CQI process will be using American Public Human Service's (APHSA) DAPIM™ model of quality improvement. APHSA's DAPIM™ model outlines five main steps: Define; Assess; Plan; Implement; and Monitor to facilitate and sustain change.

The *DAPIM*TM Model: A “Flywheel”



Major components of our CQI effort include: the identification of a leadership “sponsor” team to support and resource the county’s continuous quality improvement efforts; the identification of a work “implementation” team, consisting of mostly line staff and supervisors, to develop the plan and support the change effort; participation in PA’s QSR process to include site leads to manage logistics and local community members and staff to be reviewers; implementation of change efforts, which will be supported by a technical assistance team (i.e. OCYF, CWRC, the American Bar Association, the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network, the Administrative Offices of Pennsylvania Courts, and Hornby Zeller Associates); and support for implementation of the practice model, as needed. Implementation of this approach will include each county receiving support in achieving their individualized continuous quality improvement efforts while being supported by a more coordinated network of child welfare system collaborators through all five components as identified below:

D – Define – defining one’s desired state and what the organization wants to improve. Defining what a system seeks to improve in operational terms means engaging key stakeholders in discussion to strategically identify specific and meaningful issues that system partners are interested in improving.

A – Assess – assessing strengths and gaps in performance capacity, performance actions, outputs and outcomes. The locally driven assessment process will be an inclusive process since the achievement of positive outcomes will only be realized when the full resources of a community are garnered. Through formal and informal means, the state will support the counties’ ability to utilize existing data and other forms of assessment. This does not require the

creation of additional assessments for counties, but rather streamlines existing forms of assessment that will better inform strategic decision-making and planning.

P – Plan – planning for quick wins, medium term improvements and longer term improvements that leverage strengths and address root causes for gaps. This process will culminate in the completion of each county’s County Improvement Plan, which will drive the Needs Based Plan and Budget. The counties will be developing their own improvement plan based on mutually identified needs of the agency, community and system partners by engaging in a discussion to explore the root causes and possible remedies for the identified gaps.

I – Implement – implementing plans for maximum impact and sustainability. Successful implementation of these plans will require the county agency to engage key internal and external stakeholders who will actively support the implementation of both quick win action steps as well as the long term goals. Externally, the counties will be supported during the implementation of their plan(s) through coordinated efforts of all those external entities providing technical assistance to the county, as needed or requested by the county.

M – Monitor – monitoring progress through ongoing evaluation and follow through with CQI efforts. During this phase, the county will engage in monitoring activities that allow for evaluation and measurement of progress and impact. The PA QSR process will be utilized to drive the evaluative process. Pennsylvania is also committed to taking a more comprehensive look at practice by examining the assurance of both compliance and quality. Therefore, a crosswalk of the current compliance based licensing process and the PA QSR will be completed in an effort to enhance PA’s evaluation process.

Qualitative Service Review

Pennsylvania is currently in Phase II of the CQI roll out. Phase I began in October 2010 and included six counties. Phase II began in 2011 with an additional five counties. Counties interested in joining the effort are required to submit a letter of interest and the Self-Assessment for Participation (see [Quality Service Review Process Manual: Appendix I](#)) to their identified OCYF Regional Director and CQI Project Managers. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate agency readiness and to identify resources already in place within the county as well as those resources that will be needed to support the county’s successful participation in the CQI effort. OCYF will make the final determination on selection of counties for the upcoming phase and schedule notification meetings with those selected. The notification meeting is designed to prepare the county for the QSR process (see [Quality Service Review Process Manual: Appendix 2b](#)). During roll out, the State offers support to the counties, including guidance on building local site lead teams. State Site Leads then partner with the local teams to provide support throughout the remainder of the process. The ultimate goal is for counties to begin using the QSR on an on-going basis. For example, Philadelphia County has been completing internal reviews on a bi-monthly schedule. These reviews are targeted at specific practice areas (e.g. medically fragile children) or service system areas.

Pennsylvania, through a data analysis vendor, established the QSR sampling process. The State uses a stratified sample of cases active within 90 days of the review (see pgs. 14-18 in the [Quality Service Review Process Manual](#) for a detailed description of the process).

Inter-rater reliability is addressed during on-site reviews and in training. All reviews are completed in pairs and overseen by State and Local Site Leads. The statewide QSR protocol guides reviewers in the evaluation of Child/Youth Safety, Permanence and Well-Being Indicators, Caregiving Indicators and Practice Performance Indicators. During the review, reviewers can compare findings with each other and call in the Site Lead as needed. A case debriefing is held for each onsite review, during which the review teams present their findings and Site Leads and other reviewers ask questions about inconsistencies. Site Leads also complete a crosswalk of their reviewers' cases, comparing their qualitative written case review summaries with the indicator ratings. If there are specific sections of the protocol that are causing many reviewers confusion, CWRC will work to strengthen the training around these areas.

QSR reviewers are recruited from across the State. Particularly, they target key stakeholder groups, including: County Children and Youth Agency (CCYA) staff, regional OCYF staff, central OCYF office staff, private providers, Guardian ad Litem, Court Appointed Special Advocates, community service agencies, and Technical Assistance providers. There are no specific qualifications to be a reviewer; however, prior to completing their first review, all reviewers must complete a two-day training focused on the QSR protocol and the overarching CQI process. Site Leads observe all trainings and if someone is identified as not yet ready to review, they may be asked to defer reviewing to a future session. Deferment is not common, however it provides a nice checks and balances for the process. All State Site Lead mentors must be certified QSR reviewers and must have been a State Site Lead mentee during a previous review. Mentors help mentees become familiar with the CQI process, sampling, quality assurance of the QSR, etc. Additionally, the State requires refresher trainings when adjustments or edits have been made to the QSR protocol or process for all certified reviewers and Site Leads.

The [Quality Service Review Process Manual](#) provides an exhaustive review of the core QSR components. Following is a summary of each:

Onsite Review: During the onsite review, pairs of reviewers apply the [QSR Protocol](#) to select cases (see *Sampling* for more details). Local and state site leads are encouraged to support the review team in any way needed to complete their review in a strength-based and objective manner.

Focus Groups and Key Stakeholder Interviews: The QSR process combines the use of focus groups and key stakeholder interviews with the use of in depth case reviews to create a multi-method qualitative inquiry process. Focus group and key stakeholder interviews provide information about local practices, resources, collaboration, coordination, and working conditions that helps to provide context for and explain the case-specific review findings which provide a set of micro-point, drill-down analyses that reveal how well children, youth and their caregivers are benefiting from practices and services they are receiving in local sites. The micro and macro views of practice are combined to develop a big picture understanding of local review results and factors that have shaped current outcomes. Feedback from

the focus groups and key stakeholder interviews will be utilized in conjunction with results of reviewed cases and will be incorporated into the Next Steps Meeting so that the county can utilize this information in the development of their County Improvement Plan (CIP).

Feedback Session: The QSR provides an opportunity for the QSR reviewers to meet with the caseworker and supervisor at the conclusion of their review. The focus of this case-specific feedback session is to highlight the current strengths and accomplishments and current challenges or barriers that were identified within the case and also to provide recommendations for next steps that could move the practice forward.

Case Specific Team Debriefing: The case-specific team debriefing is designed to provide second level quality assurance. Each team presents their scores and rationale, and fellow reviewers and site leads provide input and feedback to the scoring process. In this way, the final scores have a higher level of fidelity to the indicator definitions. Additionally, the debriefing provides an opportunity for each review team to individually present system recommendations to state leaders and to local executive leadership. By including the managing chain of command in the debriefing, there is a higher degree of transparency within the county agency regarding the scoring process.

Exit Conference: At the Exit Conference, the State and Local Site Leads deliver the preliminary aggregate findings from the entire on-site review. The aggregate scores for each of the child/family status and system performance indicators are provided to county staff and the trends discovered from the focus groups and/or key stakeholder interviews are also presented. At the conclusion of this meeting, the county agency should have an overall picture of the trends and preliminary findings from the onsite review.

Post QSR Review Week: The findings from the QSR presented during the Exit Conference are only preliminary and therefore at the conclusion of the onsite QSR the Local and State Site Leads work collaboratively on a second level of quality assurance of the findings. Immediately following the onsite review, the State and Local Site Leads review, analyze, and distribute the data and information collected. This second level of quality assurance is critical to ensuring that ratings are consistent with the indicator definitions found within the Pennsylvania QSR Protocol, and all Written Case Review Summaries are standardized and in line with the core values of the QSR process. Qualitative data from the focus groups and/or key stakeholder interviews is coded and organized so that overarching themes and trends are identified. Finally, information is communicated to individual team members assigned to the QSR cases, and to the county agency.

Final Report: The Final Report provides an analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the week(s) of the onsite review, as well as relevant data from other sources. This includes an analysis of the demographic information, the final indicator scores, the Written Case Review Summaries, and the information obtained during the focus groups and/or key stakeholder interviews. The Final Report serves as a springboard for the Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI) process.

Next Steps Meeting: The Next Steps Meeting is designed to be an opportunity for the county agency's efforts to begin or continue their CQI process and developing an action plan for enhancing case practice and system performance. The Next Steps Meeting is the kickoff to the development of the County Improvement Plan.

County Improvement Plans: The County Improvement Plan (CIP) outlines the priorities and strategies on which the county agency will focus on to improve specific outcomes as a result of a comprehensive review of their practice. This review is not limited to the QSR findings, and may also include a review of additional data such as the County data packages provided by the State, quantitative measures produced by the county, licensing results, as well as the results of other qualitative data.

Other Qualitative Reviews

Following the first round CFSR, the State rolled out a QSR instrument that was modeled after the federal instrument. Though the State has since updated their QSR instrument and process, some counties continue to use the original QSR instrument for internal reviews, as the roll out of the new QSR protocol and process is occurring using a phased in approach across the state. The State is interested in moving all counties to the new tool as the previous QSR instrument was more compliance based. Pennsylvania has also recently finalized a Safety Assessment Quality Assurance Tool, which looks specifically at the assessment and planning process for the State's safety practice. This tool is being utilized in counties and via OCYF regional offices.

Quantitative Data

Pennsylvania utilizes quantitative data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) to look at county data. The State creates a data packet for each county which include indicators such as re-entry, length of time in care, age, placement type, reason for placement, etc. Counties are expected to use this data to inform implementation of their child welfare system and to aid in creating their Needs-Based Plan and Budget.

The State conducted a feasibility study and alternatives analysis which determined that a SACWIS system would not be appropriate for Pennsylvania, particularly because it is a state-supervised and county-administered system. Following the study, the State reviewed the current systems being used by counties and approved 6-7 of them for use by all counties. By July 2012, each county will have selected a State-approved system to adopt. At the State level, Pennsylvania plans to implement a statewide system that allows counties to transmit data in near real time.

USE OF DATA

Reports

Data from the QSR and from other quantitative sources is compiled in several reports, including: QSR Final Reports (see *Elements of the CQI System: Final Report* for more information on the QSR report),

Management Reports (monthly), Statewide Child Abuse Report, Statewide Adoption Report (annual), Family Center Report (annual), etc. The majority of reports are available to the public on the State's Department of Public Welfare (DPW) website. County QSR Final Reports and County Improvement Plans from Phase I have also been posted on DPW's website.

Data Software

PA data analysis contractor, Hornby, Zeller & Associates, created a database for the analysis of QSR data. Both Cognos and SPSS have been used for data analysis in the past.

Plan Development and Training

See *Elements of the CQI System: County Improvement Plans* for detailed information on the CIPs. The [Quality Service Review Process Manual](#) offers further description of the process (pg. 43), as well as a CIP Template (Appendix 28).

Statewide data is used to help prioritize improvement efforts, focus resources, improve practice and inform policy development.

Systemic Issues

Pennsylvania's CQI process collects data on systemic issues, via focus groups and key stakeholder interviews that are conducted during the QSR process. Counties use their own discretion in determining focus group questions (see [Quality Service Review Process Manual Appendix 16E](#) for suggested questions); these questions may include topics like training, supervision, etc.

Identifying and Correcting Data Quality Issues

The State uses a second-level QA process for examining QSR indicator ratings and the qualitative information including in the written case review summaries. The State described this as an ongoing process that they are always looking to enhance. As for other data sources, quality issues are addressed by the State's Information and Data Management Unit. The Unit runs several utilities on all AFCAR data received from the counties. If an outlier is identified, the data is returned to the county for their review. When information is submitted in the aggregate, the State's data analysis contractor will pull certain pieces of data to compare it to previous submissions. If discrepancies are identified, the county is contacted to review and verify the data submission.

Linking Data Sources

Linking data sources is a work in progress that will improve as the State makes continued progress with the receipt of near real time statewide data. The QSR Final Reports do make links with the review findings and available data from county AFCARS. At the county level, some are beginning to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Linking data sources at the State level is a long-term goal.

Collaborative Data Analysis Efforts

By virtue of the State's data analysis contract, data analysis in the State is a collaborative effort and both agencies are available to work collaboratively with the Counties and the State to analyze data.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Internal/External Stakeholder Collaboration

Key stakeholders around the State, including: County Children and Youth Agencies (CCYAs); Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare, Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF); the Private Provider community; the Courts; and the technical assistance community, are involved and committed to the State's CQI effort. In conjunction with the implementation of the CQI effort, the State is looking to enhance their TA collaborative with organizations like CWRC, the Statewide Adoption and Permanency Network (SWAN), the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC), and the American Bar Association (ABA). Pennsylvania is working to apply a CQI approach to its own efforts to increase collaboration and communication both internally and with stakeholders.

At the State level, youth and parent ambassadors assist with the writing of policy (e.g. the Independent Living Bulletin). Additionally, youth and parent ambassadors serve as QSR reviewers and trainers throughout the State.

The State's CQI effort also includes collaborating with the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania's Courts (AOPC); this group has been integrally involved in the process since the beginning and helped to write the QSR protocol.

Privatized Systems

Private providers whose cases have been pulled for the QSR are included in the QSR case review process and counties also have the option of having focus groups with their private providers. Often times, after experiencing the process as an interviewee, private providers want to become a QSR reviewer. Additionally, private providers have been involved in the CQI roll out, including participation in the Sustaining Change workgroup tasked with developing the CQI process.

SUMMARY DOCUMENTS

[NRCOI's Peer Network](#)

[American Public Human Services Association's \(APHSA\) DAPIM™ model](#)

[Quality Service Review Process Manual](#)

[QSR Protocol](#)