

Continuous Quality Improvement Project

Arizona

Interview with Katherine Guffey, Practice Improvement Manager

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CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

Department Structure

Arizona's CQI system was created and implemented following the State's Round One Child and Family Services Review. The State's CQI budget consists entirely of staff salaries and their travel expenses. There are eleven full time positions in the CQI unit. Leadership consists of a Practice Improvement Manager position in the central office. The Central Office Practice Improvement Unit also includes a full-time Practice Improvement Evaluation Specialist, whose primary responsibilities are performing data analysis and targeted case reviews. In addition to the central office staff, there are nine Practice Improvement (PI) Specialists located around the State. There are two PI Specialists per region with the exception of only one in the smallest region. PI Specialists are employed by the region and report to their region's Program Manager or an Assistant Program Manager.

Staff Responsibilities and Qualifications

The PI Specialist position is designed to only perform practice improvement related activities, which include conducting case reviews and feedback meetings with staff, training activities, developing and distributing policy clarifications, and participating in practice related work groups. When caseloads are very high, PI Specialists may be asked to assist the field by responding to reports or completing other case work.

All PI Specialists must meet the qualifications of a supervisor-level position. The unit is interested in hiring those with child welfare experience, excellent policy knowledge and the respect of staff in the region.

Training

Training for CQI staff is completed by the Practice Improvement Manager and experienced PI Specialists. When a new PI Specialist is hired, he or she is trained on the case review process, which includes learning all instruments and practice standards. All CQI staff attend monthly meetings with the Manager. These meetings also serve as training opportunities. For example, the group may jointly review a case and then discuss individual differences in findings. They may also train on CFSR composite measures, Excel or Access skills, writing quarterly reports, etc. Additional data analysis skill building opportunities are optional because the amount of data analysis completed by each PI Specialist varies.

At minimum, the State requires that PI Specialists to be familiar with CFSR measures and the agency's primary performance measures, and be able to create charts to present and explain the data.

The PI Manager reviews all cases handled by newly hired PI Specialists to ensure accuracy. The Manager provides detailed feedback to the PI Specialist on the quality of each case review. Once the PI Specialist has gained considerable experience in reviewing cases, the Manager pulls one to two cases per quarter to review. This process helps to maintain integrity in the reviews, serves as a training opportunity for new and veteran reviewers, and improves inter-rater reliability.

Committees

Arizona does not have any formal CQI committees on the regional level. At the state level, a Child Welfare Administration (CWA) CQI committee of Practice Improvement, Policy Unit, Children Welfare Training Institute, Social Work Assessment Team, and state level administrators meets monthly. Members of the committee share and analyze information to identify practice trends and system improvement needs, develop action plans, coordinate on-site support to field staff, and clarify practice standards to ensure consistent instruction is given to field staff.

CQI PLAN

Expectations, Missions, and Objectives

Arizona describes its' CQI Plan as an improvement-based system. The plan is outlined in the [Arizona's CQI Manual](#). Please see the manual for the plan's purpose, objective and principles.

ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

Qualitative Reviews

Case review is the primary component of Arizona's CQI Plan. Three different types of cases are reviewed: initial assessment, on-going foster care and adoption, and in-home cases. A statewide sample of cases is pulled monthly. Generally, each PI Specialist reviews four to six cases per month. Targeted reviews are completed as needed, but the majority of case reviews evaluate safety, permanency and well-being. Reviews of initial assessment cases focus on components of the investigation process, such as timeliness of initial response, sufficiency of information collection, and safety planning. Interviews are not completed for these reviews. Unlike the CFSR, the State's initial assessment case review sampling population includes all investigated reports, including reports that are closed at investigation and not opened for services. The in-home and out-of-home review instruments are similar to the CFSR instrument. The State's review instrument does not include items that can be measured through data extracted from the child welfare information system (e.g. reentry, timeliness of reunification and adoption, placement of siblings together, proximity of placement). If an issue is identified in this data, a targeted case review can be performed. Interviews are conducted via telephone for all in-home and out-of-home cases. For out-of-home cases, one parent and the caregiver(s) are interviewed. Stakeholders are not interviewed.

The State's Reports and Statistics Unit pulls a random sample for case reviews. Each region is required to submit a calendar to the Practice Improvement Manager indicating the month during which each unit in the region will be reviewed. One intent of Arizona's CQI system is to improve staff knowledge of the practice standards. To this end, sampling is designed to maximize the number of staff who experience a case review and receive feedback. Specialized in-home and adoption units are included in the sample. Juvenile justice and mental health cases are not covered by this CQI Unit because these populations are not served by the State's child welfare agency.

The PI Manager oversees all case reviews. The PI Specialists submit a list of the cases in the sample that are selected for review and the PI Manager ensures the proper procedures were followed for selection. The PI Manager also regularly reviews a sample of completed review instruments, making sure that all instructions have been followed and all questions have been answered accurately.

Inter-rater reliability is primarily addressed during case review team meetings and through the case reviews performed by the PI Manager. Detailed instructions were reported as helpful to addressing inter-rater reliability, as well as Practice Improvement Unit meetings.

Feedback Meetings

Feedback meetings are conducted with staff. The process is flexible, to meet the needs of field staff. Detailed case specific feedback is often provided in an in-person meeting between the reviewer, the CPS specialist and the supervisor. The Assistant Program Manager and the Region's Program Manager may also join the team meeting. The group discusses questions, including: What worked well? What can we share with others? What kind of barriers did you run into (e.g. resources, policy)? Is additional training needed? These meetings also serve as an opportunity to identify systemic issues. Feedback may also be provided in a meeting attended by an entire field unit, and can focus on a single practice issue rather than the full detail of the reviewed case.

Data Analysis

At the central office level, data analysis is conducted by the Practice Improvement Manager and the Practice Improvement Evaluation Specialist. At the regional level, Regional Automation Liaisons (RALs) monitor and analyze data, and produce summary reports and charts for distribution and discussion among regional staff and stakeholders.

The PI Manager and PI Evaluation Specialist monitor the state's performance on the CFSR measures, using county level permanency composite profiles that are generated by the state. CFSR permanency data is analyzed at the region, county or child level using AFCARS files produced by the state monthly. The state's Business Intelligence dashboard and many electronic data reports with child level data are also available for analysis by Practice Improvement staff, RALs and regional administrators.

Arizona is a member of the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data. The Practice Improvement Manager has been trained in the Advanced Analytics course

offered by Chapin Hall, and the state is increasingly using the Chapin Hall Data Center to analyze data on children served in out of home care.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is collected through the State's SACWIS and the Business Intelligence Dashboard systems. The Dashboard collects data on several measures, including: timeliness of initial response, timely closure of investigations, and frequency of visits with children and parents. This data is available to all supervisors and Region Program Managers.

USE OF DATA

Reports

The Reports and Statistics Unit Manager publishes a legislatively mandated semi-annual report that primarily contains information on CPS report volume and type, out-of-home exit cohorts and the in-care population. The report focuses on factors such as: number of reports, level of priority, age, ethnicity, reason for exit, amount of time in care, and adoption outcomes. This report is posted on a public website and distributed to the community.

Dashboard data is used regularly and is available to those at the supervisory level and above. This data can be drilled down by county, region, office and worker, allowing users to look at data from different angles. Many other reports are posted to servers where regions can retrieve them.

The PI Manager regularly produces data on the CFSR measures. The CFSR composite spreadsheet is sent to regions monthly, allowing each region to view all month to month county data.

Data Software

Arizona uses Access, SPSS and Excel (most commonly used by CQI Unit). The State has begun to use Tableau on its Business Intelligence Dashboard. Software is not specifically trained to PI Specialists; however they do receive some training in using the Dashboard and Excel.

Plan Development and Training

Data is used during the CWA's monthly CQI meetings. Findings are discussed with an emphasis on identifying the cause of the issue. The PI Manager explores the data and works with regional staff, the policy unit, and the training unit to identify if changes need to be made to policy, practice, or systems. Practice guides are created to help clarify policies and procedures. The CQI, Training and Policy Units must all sign off on practice guides before they are finalized.

Within the CQI Unit, the PI Manager and the PI Evaluation Specialist do the majority of data analysis and reporting, while the PI Specialists are more focused on CFSR data and presentation to the regions. The PI Manager manages the CFSR and the five-year Child and Family Services State Planning process. Familiarity with these processes and related data allows the PI Manager to speak with Region Program Managers and the Executive Team about what has or has not improved from the previous year. This

information is then used to update goals and strategies for the coming year. Regional Automation Liaisons are also skilled in data analysis software. Though they may not have child welfare experience, they can produce data and charts for managers to use when talking with stakeholders and staff. PI Specialists sometimes work hand in hand with Regional Automation Liaisons to get requested data out to the regions.

Staff involvement in CQI primarily takes place during post-case review feedback meetings. The State also has workgroups that are formed to address specific issues as needed. These workgroups include field staff.

All regions have meetings with their management team during which data is discussed. Regional action plans are developed for high priority practice areas needing improvement. Regions also participate in the development and completion of state level action plans, such as the Child and Family Services Five Year Plan.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Internal/External Stakeholders

Frequent interaction with stakeholders occurs through ongoing or time-limited committees and workgroups, many of which are attended by a member of the CQI Unit or are supported with data provided by the CQI Unit. Much of this interaction is within work groups or committees that form around particular issues or at formal events, such as a Governor's Task Force or a PIP Closeout Meeting. The State receives input regularly from stakeholder groups, such as The Children's Action Alliance's Child Welfare Committee, which includes a range of child welfare stakeholders who meet to talk about child protective services and juvenile justice issues, the Court Improvement Program Advisory Workgroup, and the Youth Advisory Board. Regions also have relationships with local stakeholders. For example, one region participates in several committees chaired by the court system, using data to discuss particular issues they are addressing.

Collaboration

The CQI Unit has recently begun working with Casey Family Programs and Chapin Hall's Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data. Through Casey Family Programs, the Practice Improvement Manager has had the opportunity to work with Barbara Needell from UC Berkeley on data analysis and developing measures. Chapin Hall staff came to Arizona to train a full day on data analysis with the Regional Program Managers and PI Specialists. These new relationships have provided ongoing technical assistance to the CQI Unit.

Privatized Systems

Private agencies are part of CQI with regard to the quality of their services. Private agencies attend meetings with regional administrators and staff. Many contracts have performance measures built into them, and the providers are required to submit client satisfaction surveys and other data.

SUMMARY DOCUMENTS

[Arizona's CQI Manual](#) – “Quality Improvement Systems Procedures and Training Manual”, updated September 2010