Continuous Quality Improvement Project

Illinois
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CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

Department Structure

The CQI system in Illinois has been in place since 1997. The budget for CQI is included within the budget for the larger Quality Assurance (QA) Division. There are 18 dedicated CQI staff based regionally throughout the State. The CQI staff responsibilities overlap with others in the QA Division. The Field Review Unit, also within the QA Division, consists of 10 staff (with an additional 5 positions currently vacant and unable to be filled due to budget restraints). The Consent Decree Unit is embedded within the Field Review Unit; 4 out of the 10 staff are responsible for monitoring the State’s Consent Decree focused on sibling placement and visitation. CQI staff are responsible for the CQI activities within their regions and to facilitate the use of data derived from the Field Review Unit to ensure that Action Plans are formulated. The CQI leadership is based out of the Central Office, with all QA Division staff reporting to the Deputy Director of Quality Assurance.

Staff Qualifications and Responsibilities

Job requirements include a Masters Degree in Social Work or related field plus 2-3 years continuous experience. Having a background in QA is a plus. The CQI positions are a Public Service Administrator Position, and are similar to a supervisory level.

Training

Most training for CQI staff is provided on-the-job. Illinois is now exploring some training options focused on data analysis.

Committees

Illinois has local, regional, and State Quality Councils. There are six Regional Quality Councils (QCs) that meet monthly. The Statewide QI Plan outlines the requirement of Regional QCs, though they are allowed some flexibility and autonomy to be creative. The Statewide Quality Council meets quarterly and consists of representatives from the six Regional QCs along with staff from other departments (training, IT, etc.). If there is an unresolved issue from one of the Regional QCs, a standardized form outlining the issue (called a one-pager) is submitted to the Statewide QC. The one-pagers are tracked using an excel spreadsheet, and minutes are kept for these meetings. If a one-pager is not resolved, it is carried over to the next meeting. Local QCs, or Site Councils, generally meet on a monthly basis. These
groups vary and can consist of supervisors, casework staff of numerous specialties (Foster Care, In-Home Family Services, Adoption, etc.), regional training staff, administrative case review staff, or clerical staff.

All regions have a Peer Review Committee which CQI staff are involved in. This helps with the Peer Review process as these reviews require a great deal of preparation and organization. These committees are responsible for vetting through all of the data and determining how they are going to use it. The committees meet at least quarterly. Some regions also have a Training Committee or Health and Safety Committee.

### CQI PLAN

#### Expectations, Missions, and Objectives

The State QI Plan outlines some of the objectives for CQI, and contains a mission statement. It is designed to be a guidebook that outlines the minimum requirements of what the regions need to include in their regional plans. Illinois describes their system as improvement-based, though some elements feel more compliance oriented. They are currently exploring ways to make it a more energetic and qualitative process.

#### CQI Policies

There are no formal CQI policies in Illinois. Over the years participation in CQI activities has been built into performance plans, though it is not a requirement for staff to participate.

### ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

#### Qualitative Reviews

- **Outcome Enhancement Review (OER)**

The OER in Illinois mirrors the federal CFSR review. The tool is comprehensive and has been customized to Illinois’ policies and practices, so contains additional elements. Every six months 66 cases are reviewed Statewide. Data from these reviews is used to monitor the State’s PIP progress. A random sampling of cases is selected, though it is pre-determined and stratified based on what they have included in their PIP measurement plan. Because they have a heavily privatized system, they adjust their sample accordingly (i.e. by pulling more foster care cases from the private sector than DCFS managed cases).

Case specific interviews are conducted for each review with the child, parent, caretaker, caseworker, and any other involved stakeholders (GALs, CASAs, service providers, etc.). Inter-rater reliability is addressed for these reviews. There is a first look at the case using SACWIS before the interviews are conducted, and reviewers meet with the team leader all throughout the process. These reviews are then looked at centrally.
The regional CQI staff are responsible for the oversight of these reviews, making sure that there is fidelity and integrity to the process. They also ensure that staff are adhering to what is in their Regional Quality Improvement Plans (and that it is consistent with what’s in the Statewide PIP).

- **Agency Performance Team (APT) Reviews**

Illinois has a highly privatized child welfare system. They have a performance-based contracting system in place so private agencies are required to hit specific targets each year. The QA Division and Monitoring Division are responsible for conducting Agency Performance Team Reviews. The Monitoring Division reviews private sector cases while the QA Division reviews DCFS managed cases. Although DCFS cases aren’t a part of performance contracting, Illinois is interested in looking at the system as a whole. For the purpose of the APT review, DCFS is treated as a private agency so their performance can be matched up with that of the private sector. The same tools are used to review both private agency and DCFS cases and all of the information is entered into a database that then enables them to rank the DCFS agency against the private agencies. No interviews are conducted for these reviews.

The APT reviews are going to be scaled down somewhat so more of an emphasis can be placed on ensuring inter-rater reliability. Currently, the Deputy Director and Deputy Director of Quality Assurance work closely with one another to provide oversight and administration on this process.

- **Peer Reviews**

Peer reviews are conducted on a quarterly basis. Three different review tools are used: one for investigation, one for in-tact families, and one for foster care. Both placement and permanency related practices are looked at (if there is a goal for adoption that work is also included). Regions are required to review 10% of their cases in each of those specialties over the course of a year (or 2.5% of cases on a quarterly basis). The regional CQI staff pull the random sampling for these cases. The Peer Review Committees in each of the regions then work out the details to get all cases reviewed. Validations are in place to ensure inter-rater reliability.

- **Consent Decree Review**

The consent decree in Illinois focuses on sibling placement and visitation. These reviews are conducted by four QA Division staff using a standardized tool on a daily. Every agency has to be reviewed on an annual basis. Exit conferences are conducted based on the findings of these reviews, and TA and training is provided if staff are not clear on what is required of them. They’ve seen a drastic improvement in this area.

- **Specialized Reviews**

The Field Review Unit generally takes the lead on any specialized reviews. For instance, right now they’re looking at a certain area of the State that has a high number of pending investigations with complaints coming from the field that they’re not staffed properly. They’re in stage two of this lengthy review process. In addition to case reviews, they’re surveying all staff in terms of how they feel about the supervision they’re receiving and conducting a workload analysis. Following the first stage of this
review they had given this particular area time to implement an action plan. They’re now doing a second round of reviews.

**Quantitative Data**

Illinois pulls their data primarily from their State SACWIS system. The State also has some larger mainframe data systems.

### USE OF DATA

**Reports**

There are specific reports that are generated and sent out on regular basis. They are a combination of both topic based and comprehensive.

**Data Software**

Illinois utilizes Nomad, and is currently trying to transfer all systems onto SQL. For instance, the OER database is currently on Nomad but will be transferring to SQL. CQI staff use excel, and have used Access.

**Plan Development and Training**

Based on the findings from the Peer Reviews, Regions are required to design and implement Action Plans. Results from the OERs also result in improvement plans as necessary, with other review data being used as a proxy for when they’re in between reviews.

Data, both qualitative and quantitative, is used to inform the State CFSP and APSRs, which are facilitated out of the Quality Assurance Division. The training program also utilizes data, and requests reports from the Quality Assurance Division on a regular basis. Data is also shared with the policy division.

**Systemic Issues**

Focus groups and staff surveys have been conducted to explore systemic issues within Illinois. Other staff throughout the State, such as the Regional Recruitment Councils, also use data to explore systemic issues.

**Identifying and Correcting Data Quality Issues**

With the OER it is easier to identify data quality issues, as the different levels of debriefing provides more opportunities for any mistakes to be discovered.

**Linking Data Sources**

There is no formal system in place to link data sources. QA staff that have the knowledge and training can do this manually.

**Collaborative Data Analysis Efforts**
They collaborate with others as a system to analyze data. For instance, they work with the Foster Care Utilization Review Program on everything surrounding the Federal CFSR Review and the State PIP. They also utilize Northwestern University and Chapin Hall on a number of data analysis efforts.

**STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

**Internal/External Stakeholders**

Within Illinois private agencies are considered external stakeholders, and are involved in program improvement and sharing of data. Some foster parents also participate in the Regional PIP processes, but there is a desire to see a more meaningful engagement specific to CQI. Staff and stakeholder surveys are conducted, but the State is exploring more ways to effectively engage stakeholders.

**Collaboration**

Illinois’ QA Division also works with the courts and Court Improvement Project team.

**Privatized Systems**

All private agencies in Illinois have their own CQI systems and QA divisions. Private agency cases are also reviews as part of the OERs and APTs (see above for more details).

**FUTURE PLANS**

Illinois is always trying to improve. They want the CQI process to reflect their vision, and are exploring ways to really have that happen.