

Continuous Quality Improvement Project

New Mexico

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January 24, 2012

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

Department Structure

New Mexico's CQI Department is currently under reorganization and development. Currently, the Practice Improvement (PI) Bureau is the most recognizable as a quality assurance unit. Many positions within this Bureau have a program evaluation component and provide feedback to different areas of the agency. Additional CQI activities happen within New Mexico's Research and Evaluation Unit, which produced the bulk of their data. CQI activities are infused into the budgets of numerous Bureau's and staff positions.

There are nine staff within the PI Bureau working on CQI related activities. This Bureau includes a Quality Assurance Unit that consists of a QA Manager and four staff members. Administratively they are all a part of the Central Office and physically housed in Albuquerque.

This current structure has been in place for approximately five years. However, the Quality Assurance Unit has been operational for over ten.

Staff Qualifications and Responsibilities

Quality Assurance Unit staff are required to have at least a Bachelor's level degree and license in social work. The PI Bureau Chief is required to have a Master's level degree, but not required to maintain licensure. Educational requirements may be waived based on years of related experience. Staff within the PI Bureau work on other duties in addition to their CQI responsibilities for approximately 10% of the time. They're currently in the process of redesigning and realigning the responsibilities of the positions to integrate with the Research and Evaluations and the Policy, Training and Federal Reporting Bureaus to create a CQI structure within the agency. Once operational, these positions will be fully dedicated to CQI related activities. The QA Unit Manager and staff are currently 100% dedicated to CQI.

Training

All CQI staff have to fulfill the basic training required by the agency. Individual training is provided to staff as they join the Quality Assurance Unit so that they are brought up to speed with the requirements of the job. Staff attend all agency mandated trainings as well as additional training offerings so they can be abreast to what is happening within the agency. Staff were also encouraged to participate in the Federal CFSRs to expand their knowledge of the system and to see how some of the instruments used during the process.

Committees

There are no formal CQI focused committees within New Mexico. The PI Bureau and other agency staff work closely with the Court Improvement Project and are part of that effort. There is a focus on data sharing and review with the focus being primarily to look at how the court functions and how they can improve particular permanency outcomes for children and youth.

*October, 2012 Update: A group has formed to begin a CQI focused committee process. This statewide group emerged out New Mexico's Implementation Center Project Work Group and is part of an effort to implement the State's Practice Model.

CQI PLAN

Expectations, Missions, and Objectives

The PI Bureau implements the agency-wide objectives and procedures. There is a piece within the State's CFSP that describes the QA process. This process is both compliance and improvement based. Historically, the focus was more on the former rather than the latter. Recent efforts focused on implementing the Practice Model using adaptive leadership techniques have expanded efforts to be more improvement based.

CQI Policies

New Mexico's policy manual touches upon Quality Assurance Reviews. There is a policy statement within the general services policy section that talks about quality assurance and what the purpose is. The procedures for this include information on how the State implements quality assurance.

ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

Qualitative Reviews

Internal CFSR

New Mexico's primary quality assurance review mirrors the Federal CFSR process. One quality review is conducted every month. Counties to be reviewed are identified in advance; 12 counties are reviewed within one year. It's a comprehensive review that uses the same OSRI tool used during the Federal CFSR

process. A random sample is used based on reports generated that list all children in care and children served through voluntary in-home services. They look at both foster care and in-home services cases.

Case review includes case-related participant interviews with the goal of having a minimum of five interviews conducted for each case. Interviews are conducted with the child if they are school aged, parents, foster parents, workers, and service providers.

Review debriefing is conducted in the same way as the Federal CFSR. They spend approximately twenty minutes per case during debriefing, with additional case consultation available with the Quality Assurance Manager on an as-needed basis. After the QA Manager reviews and approves the instruments they are sent to a contractor that is an expert in the child welfare CFSR reviews. This is done to ensure their ratings are consistent with Federal standards and expectations. The preliminary results of the review are provided to the County Office Manager and Regional Manager. The County Office Manager and/or Regional Manager present and discuss the results of the review with all office staff at the end of the review week. Results of the review are finalized and sent to various agency management staff typically within four weeks of the on-site review.

The QA Unit staff conducting the reviews are paired with county office staff peer reviewers. These peer reviewers are provided a six hour training prior to participating in any kind of review. This training covers both the CFSR Federal structure in terms of safety, well-being and permanency outcomes (how the outcomes are operationalized and the information that is used to determine conformity with those standards), as well as how to apply the review instrument to cases. They also review the entire QA process including what a review looks like and the results that are generated.

Specially Designated Reviews

The QA Unit will conduct specially designated qualitative reviews as needed. For example, they recently completed a review on a cohort of investigations that were conducted by the agency. They added to material pulled from the CFSR instrument to look at conformity and alliance with the State's practice model. Periodically, they will assign specific types of case reviews and activities to the QA Unit based upon needs or issues that arise within the agency. Interviews are conducted as part of this process.

Quantitative Data

The State's SACWIS system is their primary source of quantitative data.

USE OF DATA

Reports

The State is able to produce numerous reports through their SACWIS system. For instance, they produce a 907 Report on a regular basis which includes information on all children currently in custody. The reports that they're able to pull are vast, and some examples include:

- reports that contain information about services and who services are provided to;

- reports that include information on the number of investigations that are conducted, and how many of those are pending;
- reports that look at process information and how cases are moving or not moving through the system;
- reports that look at length of time in care and placement stability;
- reports that look at identifying children who have been in custody for 13 months, 16 months, and 22 months;
- reports that look at worker-child visitation and what children have been visited each and every month ; and
- 360 county profiles, which are typically run on a quarterly basis.

Much of the data they have begins at the county level and then is able to be rolled up to a regional then statewide report. Some of these reports are published on the agency website at www.cyfd.org. They are accessible to any public or individual entity. Some other reports are distributed based upon function and need. These reports as well as aggregated data from the QA reviews are the foundation of the State's Child and Family Services Plan. They provide the baseline to assess current performance and are used to establish targeted improvement goals.

Data Software

New Mexico utilizes a variety of software including Excel, Access, and SPSS. Typically they try to hire staff with knowledge of this software prior to starting in a CQI position within the Research and Evaluation Bureau.

Plan Development and Training

Development of local improvement plans is not required. Data results are used constantly at the State level. Their CFSP and APSRs are based on all of the CFSR measures, including the data sets. They not only look at the Statewide indicators, but also incorporate the quality assurance review information.

In regards to training development, quantitative and qualitative data results are used to help inform the State as they develop their annual training plan that is incorporated into the CFSP and APSR.

Systemic Issues

In a limited way, New Mexico is able to use data to assess systemic issues. They have an agreement with a public University to have them as a primary training partner. An evaluation on any training provided by the University is conducted.

Identifying and Correcting Data Quality Issues

The Research and Evaluation Unit is responsible for identifying and addressing data inconsistencies.

Linking Data Sources

New Mexico is able to manually link data sources by looking at quantitative data produced from SACWIS through the lens of the qualitative reviews conducted. The qualitative data helps to explain why the quantitative data looks the way it does and helps to give insight into practice.

Collaborative Data Analysis Efforts

Through their training partnership with the University some collaborative data analysis is conducted. They discuss things that they are seeing based upon training evaluation results. In addition, the agency has been able to utilize the resources provided through their Implementation Center Project to conduct additional data analysis.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

Internal/External Stakeholders

New Mexico has opportunities for internal stakeholders to be involved in looking at data, trying to understand it and possibly coming up with methods for improvement. They see the most active efforts at this time in relation to their Implementation Center grant and work with the Court Improvement Project. For the Implementation Center grant, the State recently developed a Statewide Practice Model and are looking at implementation. Because of this there continues to be a fairly significant involvement of internal stakeholders through an advisory committee with representatives from the courts, foster parents, youth advisory group, Citizen Review Panel, CASA panel, University and Tribes. The State also works actively with New Mexico's Court Improvement Project to collaboratively use data from both systems to identify systemic strengths and barriers.

Periodically, stakeholder interviews are conducted to look at larger systems issues. The one most recently completed was in December of 2011. These interviews were conducted with a group of foster parents. New Mexico also has a Federal Diligent Recruitment Grant. As part of this grant focus groups were conducted, primarily focused on foster parents, at pilot implementation zones.

Collaborations

New Mexico partners with a public University, the courts, and behavioral health programs. CQI staff have also done some work with the public education department, looking specifically at children in the foster care system and their educational needs. They've also worked with the Department of Health, again focusing on the developmental needs of children being served by the child welfare agency. By nature of their Departmental structure, they are fairly involved with the Juvenile Justice population.

Privatized Systems

Child welfare programs in New Mexico are not privatized.

FUTURE PLANS

Currently, New Mexico is working toward expanding and enhancing their CQI system. They are working with the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and Cambridge Leadership Associates to develop a framework around adaptive leadership. Additionally, the agency is planning on integration of the CQI components within the agency to align services while also identifying gaps and addressing barriers.

Within the Practice Improvement Bureau they are developing the capacity to provide technical assistance to field staff. So not only are they going to conduct assessments, they will also be able to have resources they can direct to the field staff to work with them on identifying and addressing what they see as potential barriers or needs.