

## Continuous Quality Improvement Project

### New York

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## CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

### Department Structure

New York's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Unit is within the Division of Child Welfare and Community Services. As such, the State's CQI budget falls under the budget allotted to that Division. The CQI Unit consists of eight staff members supervised by the CQI Data Director all based out of the Central Office. Although the CQI Unit is in the Central Office, they work closely with Regional Office staff that have direct relationships with local districts and authorized residential care agencies. Because CQI is so closely linked to the CFSR, the CQI Unit works closely with the Prevention, Permanency and Program Support Unit.

### Staff Responsibilities and Qualifications

In addition to CQI-focused duties, staff members have other job responsibilities such as overseeing New York's fatality work and developing databases focused on fatality and child safety. The CQI Unit staff members have basic State civil service job requirements and possess a range of different skills, including use of logic models and aligned performance measures. Many have familiarity with Access, Excel, and SPSS. Due to the wide ranging job responsibilities of the CQI Unit, the staff members represent a broad knowledge base.

### Training

The CQI Unit staff receive focused training based on current initiatives, priorities, strengths and areas needing improvement. There has been SPSS training for staff. New staff members are trained in advanced analytics, particularly the use of longitudinal cohort data in determining outcomes.

### Committees

In New York, the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and CQI are closely linked. They have formal Program Improvement Plan (PIP) meetings with the Regional Office Directors, which will end as soon as the State closes out their PIP. The CQI Data Director and the Prevention, Permanency & Program Support Unit Director engage regularly with the Regional Office Directors and receive a great deal of

feedback regarding the CQI process and how things are going within the Regions. Some regions have their own formal committees for the CFSR.

There is a formal committee between the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project and NYS' Office of Children and Family Services. This committee is fully supported by leadership within the State, and focuses on CQI initiatives and data topics. They meet on a quarterly basis with additional trainings and meetings occurring as needed. They're currently working on how to track and document the work generated from this committee.

New York has a state supervised, county administered system; in addition to the state, there are three key players to New York's CQI: local departments of social services, residential care agencies, and the courts. As such, the Unit is developing opportunities for conversations to occur between residential care agencies, local districts, and the State.

## CQI PLAN

### Expectations, Missions and Objectives

New York describes its' CQI as having an improvement-based approach. There are no formal missions of the CQI Unit, but there are targets and expectations for results and improving outcomes. As CQI is immersed in all of the other policies within child welfare, there are no formal CQI specific policies.

New York utilizes a logic model framework for CQI. Created by OCFS to support the development, implementation and evaluation of the State's PIP, local districts are now encouraged to use this tool on a regular basis. The logic model consists of a strengths and needs assessment, strategies and process measures (or outputs), and outcomes. The [data guide for this logic model framework](#) focuses on the strengths and needs assessment component. Data is provided to help local districts assess their current situation and identify what needs to be done to achieve the identified outcomes.

[\*Sample Logic Model Draft: Locating and Engaging Fathers and Other Relatives\*](#)

## ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

### Qualitative Reviews

New York conducts four qualitative compliance reviews: Ongoing Monitoring and Assessments, Safety and Permanency Assessments, Permanency Panels, and Voluntary Agency Reviews.

- Ongoing Monitoring and Assessments (OMAs)

These reviews occur once every three years and look specifically at safety and risk in child protective cases. They look at the whole case investigation (timeliness and quality of the investigation, the assessments, and the decisions) and determine whether or not the county met the key components. Each county is reviewed once every three years. After each review, if there are any areas noted as needing improvement, the local DSS is notified and asked to create an action plan. Sampling for these reviews is safety-focused but randomly selected. To address inter-rater reliability, all reviewers use the

same tool. The tool includes a number of regulation-based questions and goes through the continuum of what is expected in a case all the way up to the decision to close the case. A coordinator within New York’s Monitoring Unit oversees the work done by all of the reviewers. All reviewers have a child welfare background, and caseworkers within local districts are encouraged to participate. Interviews are not conducted, but there is a team that works in partnership on these reviews between the local DSS and the State.

- Safety and Permanency Assessments

These assessments review foster care cases once every three years. They’re primarily done with the largest districts in New York only – those who have the highest percentage of children in foster care. The reviewers are the same as those conducting the OMA reviews.

- Permanency Panels

Permanency panels look at additional information around permanency and are completed annually. Regional offices decide which counties will have a permanency panel review. There are seven categories identified, and usually three different categories are looked at during a panel. The panel identifies children who are in foster care and then conduct a review of the casework practice regarding obtaining permanency for that particular child. The State is looking to change how they currently conduct permanency panels to become more aligned with the practices being promoted by Casey Family Programs. They’re working with Casey this year and will be doing something similar to their model. They identify children in foster care and look at their case from the first day they entered care up until the day they reviewed the case to determine why permanency hasn’t been found for that particular child.

- Authorized Residential Care Agency Reviews

These reviews, done with the residential care agencies in New York, are conducted solely by Regional Office Staff. These reviews are labor intensive and focus on just a couple of cases. They look at case records and conduct interviews with children and stakeholders. Reviewers go onsite to the agency and participate in interviews with the child and caseworker, look at the building itself, any incident reports, and conduct a medical background review.

## **Quantitative Data**

Quantitative data is primarily collected through the State’s SACWIS system. They have a contract with Chapin Hall to develop information cohorts using SACWIS data. Different data sources (qualitative and quantitative) are not currently linked to one another.

## **USE OF DATA**

### **Reports**

Numerous reports are generated using SACWIS data. Statewide, the CQI Unit sends out two reports per year focused on key end outcomes (permanency, recurrence, and reentry). They also have a monthly report that identifies key CPS performance and current caseload size. Monthly reports specific to some measures are also generated monthly. OCFS staff, county staff, and residential care agency staff have

access to these statewide reports. Outcome data is also regularly posted to the OCFS website, providing the public access to some of these reports. Additionally, NYS participates in the Multi-State Foster Care Data Archive and all districts have access to this web-based data inquiry site.

Each district also receives a key end outcome data report twice per year. They receive monthly reports focused on process data, timeliness, and safety investigations. These reports are accessible to OCFS and county staff as well as the public through the OCFS website.

[Sample County: Summary Baseline/Actual/Target \(BAT\) Safety Outcome Measures Report and Summary Baseline/Actual/Target \(BAT\) Permanency Outcome Measures Report](#)

[OCFS's Child Welfare Program and Practice Improvement Data Profile Web Pages](#)

[Statewide CFSR Data Measures](#)

Additional reports for every voluntary agency are created for end outcomes data. These reports are accessible to all OCFS and county staff, and are posted to the OCFS intranet. Staff also have the ability to pull reports from the SACWIS system at any time. Additionally, longitudinal outcome data can be accessed through the web-based Multi-State Foster Care Data Archive that is maintained by Chapin Hall.

The CQI Unit has created a companion teaching guide to go along with the data. Each data chart and data set has a page or more of descriptive information covering the relevancy of the data and what the data measures. The teaching guide also includes a tool that allows users to easily translate and communicate data findings by inserting their relevant numbers into a pre-existing template.

[Excerpt: Sample Data Guide for Permanency Outcomes](#)

### **Data Software**

Microsoft Excel is used most frequently when analyzing data and generating reports. They prefer this software since it's the most user friendly to the end user as they can easily sort the data by the different variables. Microsoft Access and SPSS are also used, but not as frequently as Excel.

### **Plan Development and Training**

Data is frequently used for plan development. When the State began their CFSR Program Improvement Plan (PIP), the expectation was that each district would also create their own individual PIP. Districts were asked to conduct their own local self assessment and create a PIP based on the results. One area they needed to incorporate into their plan was around family engagement. Because of this requirement, training was provided to counties around several family engagement strategies. Each local PIP was submitted in the form of a logic model, and they reported quarterly on outputs and early/intermediate outcomes. Many of the districts have concluded their first PIP.

Data is also used at the State level to develop the APSR and CFSP. The bi-annual key outcome measure reports are instrumental in determining areas the State needs to work on. Strategies are then developed to address these areas of need. Because of this work, the State has been able to move away from

forming hypotheses based on gut feelings, as they now have data that they can use to help inform their overall thoughts and guide where they want to go.

### **Systemic Issues**

There is no formal system for addressing systemic issues (e.g. quality of training, availability and quality of services) under the CQI Unit. The Training Unit conducts surveys of both voluntary agencies and local Departments of Social Service to identify training and technical assistance needs for the upcoming year. In regards to recruitment and retention, the State is able to identify and address these systemic issues. By looking at the end outcomes data reports very closely, they're able to identify trends and then dig deeper into those particular areas. For instance, if there are a high number of moves from a certain foster home type (i.e. therapeutic) they can identify those lateral moves and then look closer to try and figure out why those moves are happening (i.e. are there retention issues related to the need to provide more focused training?).

### **Identifying and Correcting Data Quality Issues**

The State works with the local districts on data quality issues and regularly sends reports asking them to clean up data (especially around race/ethnicity). They continually remind folks of the need for accurate and timely data.

## **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

### **Internal/External Stakeholders**

The CQI Unit works very closely with the court system in New York, as well as the Child Welfare Court Improvement Project team (i.e.: OCFS staff co-chair the statewide agency/court collaborative, participated in the Court's data metrics development workgroup, provides TA to local county/Family Court collaborations).

Upon implementation of the data reports and data packets distributed to the counties and residential care agencies, the CQI Unit made a great effort to ensure that the data and reports they were providing were what the field would find useful; throughout the development of the data reports, they sought input to help agencies understand the reports and find them useful. The CQI Unit has reached out numerous times to stakeholders and continues to do so as they redefine the data. They also share data with other agencies (i.e. substance abuse, juvenile justice, etc).

Targeted partnership groups have sprung up as a result of the data, such as the collaboration between the counties and courts. Twenty-one of the larger districts (counties) now have regular stakeholder meetings with between stakeholder partners such as the courts and mental health systems.

### **Collaboration**

The CQI Unit has been working with Casey Family Programs and Chapin Hall's Multi State Foster Care Data Archive.

## **Privatized Systems**

The voluntary agencies within New York are privatized systems. In addition to the bi-annual end outcomes reports generated by the CQI Unit, many of the voluntary agencies conduct their own CQI reviews. Some have CQI Directors and staff. CQI is a continual focus within these privatized systems based on data and any other issues that arise within their agencies.

## **Improving/Expanding CQI**

In 2011, the CQI Unit developed and distributed outcome data packets for the residential care agencies. Using a longitudinal perspective, CQI reported agency performance rates for:

- permanent exits,
- number and type of moves (lateral, step up, and step down moves),
- re-entry, and
- safety.

These residential care data packets will be produced annually and plans are underway to post this information on the OCFS web page. Additionally, forums will be held March-June 2012 with local (county) social services districts and residential care agencies. The purpose of these forums is to encourage data driven outcome improvement discussions. These discussions are designed to follow a hypothesis statement:

- “We have noted that...” (What does the data and other information tell us?), and
- “We believe it is because...” (What are the potential underlying factors?)
- “So we plan to...” (What are some potential strategies to impact the underlying factors?)
- “Which will result in...?” (What is the anticipated outcome improvement?)

The local district outcome data packets, which have been produced twice/year since 2009 will be enhanced in 2012. Plans are underway to link safety information to permanency in order explore potential links between placement/placement outcomes and CPS history.

Race and Ethnicity data (Disproportionate Minority Representation) is also a large component of the OCFS local district data packets and this data will continue to be produced and distributed/posted annually. This data informs OCFS’ Racial Equity and Cultural Competency initiatives.

They’re planning to add data sets to these, and rework them to be sure they’re kept fresh and relevant.

In addition to the above, OCFS is exploring methods to measure the effectiveness and enhance the CQI focus on preventive services. A 2012 plan of action is under development.

OCFS understands that creating different CQI conversations using newly developed data and information will help keep the CQI focus fresh.

## SUMMARY DOCUMENTS

[Logic Model Data Guide](#)

[Sample Logic Model Draft: Locating and Engaging Fathers and Other Relatives](#)

[Sample County: Summary Baseline/Actual/Target \(BAT\) Safety Outcome Measures Report](#)

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