

## Continuous Quality Improvement Project

### Texas

Interview with Julie Shores, Division Administrator of Accountability  
Kim Stiles-Podhajsky, CFSR Team Lead  
Katherine Humphrey, CFSR Program Specialist  
Gwen Gray, Division Administrator of Investigations  
Daniel Estabrook, Quality Assurance Program Specialist for Investigations  
[julie.shores@dfps.state.tx.us](mailto:julie.shores@dfps.state.tx.us) • 512-438-4989  
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### CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CQI) STRUCTURE

#### Department Structure

There are two divisions within the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), Child Protective Services Program, which are involved in continuous quality improvement activities in the State:

- **The Division of Accountability** is led by a Division Administrator and consists of the following staff: Team Leader, Program Specialist, and Program Improvement Specialists (5 FTE). The five PI Specialists are spread out around the State and share a staff of 18 Quality Assurance Specialists. Texas has 11 regions total; four regions have one QA Specialist each, seven regions have two QA specialists each. *Division staff will be referred to as the CFSR Team from this point forward.* The Division Administrator of Accountability reports to the Director of Services.
- **The Division of Investigations** is led by a Division Administrator and their QA program consists of the following staff: Team Leader, Quality Assurance Analysts (4.0 FTE). The QA Analysts are spread around the State. *Division staff will be referred to as the Investigations Team from this point forward.* The Division Administrator of Investigations reports to the Director of Investigations.

Both Divisions are housed in Central Office, though many of their staff are located around the State. The CFSR Team is strictly responsible for Texas's internal CFSR process, which began in 2001. The Investigations Quality Assurance Team, introduced in September 2008, primarily reviews cases of investigations that were closed out and did not receive additional services. The group also looks at cases that were screened out prior to the investigation stage.

#### Staff Qualifications and Responsibilities

The job qualifications for both the CFSR and Investigations Teams are similar, which include having a Bachelor's Degree and prior CPS experience. Additionally, the Investigations Team's QA Analysts are required to have previous supervisory experience. Though only required for QA Analysts, the majority of both teams' staff has experience as either supervisors or program directors.

The Investigations Team is exclusively responsible for CQI-related activities. The CFSR Team primarily does CQI-related activities, however, one third of the staff act as facilitators for an Organizational Effectiveness initiative (utilizing APHSA's DAPIM Model).

### **Training**

New hires on the CFSR Team receive one-on-one training from veteran team members. All new QA Specialists are paired up with experienced specialists for their first few reviews. The majority of training is on the job. If additional training is needed, the Team has access to DFPS's Training Division. Monthly calls are held with the entire CFSR Team, as well as with the PI Specialists alone. Meeting minutes are kept for all calls. The Team also maintains a FAQ sheet for PI Specialists, which is updated regularly.

New hires on the Investigations Team also receive mentoring during their first few case reviews. On occasion, the Team has trained with DFPS's Training Division. As QA Analysts are spread across the State, the Team holds monthly phone calls to review cases and ensure that everyone is on the same page with the instrument. Meeting minutes are kept for all calls.

### **Committees**

Texas's Department of Family and Protective Services hosts a quarterly Quality Assurance Consortium which includes leadership from APS, CPS, Child Care Licensure, Statewide Intake, Operations and Legal. The primary purpose of these meetings is to share information. The Consortium's focus topic changes quarterly.

## **CQI PLAN**

### **Expectations, Missions, and Objectives**

Texas does not have a formal mission statement for its CQI activities; instead both the CFSR and Investigations teams operate under DFPS's mission, vision and values. The expectation for the CFSR Team is to complete case reviews and provide data on a quarterly basis (this data is used for quarterly federal PIP reporting). CFSR staff is also expected to attend regional unit meetings and assist with trainings. The expectation for the Investigations Team is to complete case reviews and produce reports in a timely manner. Additionally, both PI Specialists and QA Analysts are responsible for conducting quarterly data debriefings with case workers and supervisors.

The CFSR Team describes its reviews as more improvement than compliance-based. The primary focus is to use outcomes to show regions what they did well and where they can improve. The Investigations Team describes their reviews as more compliance-based but moving toward improvement-oriented.

### **CQI Policies**

Texas has guidance for CQI on the WebPages of its divisions.

## ELEMENTS OF THE CQI SYSTEM

### Qualitative Reviews: Investigations

The Investigations Team's goal is to complete a statistically representative review of all closed investigation cases statewide (approximately 4,000 reviews annually). QA Analysts use a QA guide to answer questions about selected cases. The QA tool includes 107 questions and primarily focuses on child safety and investigation policy (see [Archive of INV QA Questions](#) for the list of questions used). The investigation's review is a review of all information contained in the case files, including recorded interviews. QA specialists do not interview staff as part of their review. . Once all cases in the region have been reviewed, Analysts compile the findings into a report that identifies trends and patterns in the data. Reports are distributed to the regions and each region is responsible for responding to items highlighted by the QA Analysts. For example, if they cannot locate case information or if a dashboard measure is particularly low, the region must make a plan for improving that item. The regions are given access to the QA database so that supervisors and workers can pull up information on cases within their unit that were reviewed. Theoretically, each worker has access to everything that was said about his or her case and each supervisor is able to see how their unit and their individual workers are doing on each item. Occasionally the QA Analysts will focus on a single issue during their quarterly read. These reads can identify with much more specificity how caseworkers are addressing the issues being examined.

To address inter-rater reliability, each QA Analyst reviews cases from several different regions. This way, the impact for an individual region is mitigated if a reviewer is reviewing differently from the rest of the team. The Team's monthly calls also serve the purpose of addressing inter-rater reliability, giving reviewers a chance to ask questions and gather feedback on ratings.

### Qualitative Reviews: CFSR

The CFSR Team uses the federal CFSR instrument (23 items, 7 outcomes) to review 360 cases per quarter (20 cases per QA Specialist). Ten in-home cases and ten foster care cases (with any attached investigations) are reviewed per QA Specialist. The Team follows the federal CFSR standards for interviews; however, as a result of the size of the sample, the Team only requires that an attempt be made to interview the appropriate parties (e.g. parents, foster parents, worker, supervisor, etc.). QA Specialists review the cases and then enter them into a secure database, only accessible by CQI staff. At the end of the review, the QA Specialists pull reports from the database to share with caseworkers and their supervisors at a debriefing. Everyone in the chain of command is invited from caseworker up to Regional Director. On a quarterly basis, PI Specialists take the case review data and write [Structured Case Reading Summary Reports \(template\)](#), identifying high-level trends across the regions. Finally, Central Office creates 11 regional reports and then compiles them all into a statewide, very high-level report. The State also produces a quarterly item outcomes summary report. See [Outcomes Summary Report](#) for example. Reports are posted to the intranet and used in management meetings. The CFSR Team heavily promotes the use of the intranet page for staff to see where regions are strong and where they need improvements.

In addition to their monthly calls, the CFSR Team takes a number of steps to address inter-rater reliability. At minimum once annually the Team reviews a case individually and then gathers to discuss findings and any variances. As mentioned previously, the FAQ list is maintained on an ongoing basis with the most up-to-date interpretations of the tool. In the past, the Team has traded cases between regions to determine if there are any regional differences in interpreting the review instrument. QA Specialist in one region trades out four cases with QA Specialist in another region and these cases are then reviewed by the home region's PI Specialist to review for rating discrepancies among individual regional teams. Because QA Specialists report to different PI Specialists, this exercise helps to identify variances in review practices across the Team. QA Specialist will fill in for one another if there are vacancies in a region, resulting in even more cross-regional readings.

The Team's five PI Specialists oversee the CFSR process in their respective regions. Each Specialist supervises three or four QA Specialists. Of the 20 cases read by each QA Specialist, the PI Specialist reads behind five of them. Additionally, the State Office has two people who each review one case per QA Specialist. This means that each QA Specialist has seven secondary reviews of their cases quarterly. During the time of a CFSR Program Improvement Plan, all of the items that are measured for the PIP are subject to 100% QA.

### **Quantitative Data**

The Investigations Team uses quantitative data from IMPACT, the State's SACWIS system. Some data auto-fills into the QA Guide directly from IMPACT. This information is double-checked to ensure that no errors have occurred during the auto-fill. The State Office uses IMPACT to run reports on investigations, e.g., if the State wants to know how many investigations led to X outcome, they can find the information on IMPACT. The CFSR Team primarily uses the qualitative data from their case reading reports, however they do use quantitative data to look at all items and outcomes. Statistics are run to see if statistically significant changes in outcomes have taken place over time.

## **USE OF DATA**

### **Reports**

In addition to the regional CFSR and Investigation reports, the structured case review summary reports, the quarterly item outcomes summary report and the statewide CFSR reports, the CQI unit also releases a Regional PIP Report. See [Regional PIP Report](#) for example.

Members of the CFSR Team volunteer to use items or outcomes from the CFSR guide to develop PIP Tips for supervisors and caseworkers. A specific item will be chosen, and then policy and practice tips are added to provide a guide for workers. QA Specialists and PI Specialists use these guides for conducting trainings within units. PIP Tips are available on the State's intranet page. Quarterly regional reports are also posted to this page. Because the State is currently under a federal PIP, the CFSR Team will share PIP Tips during post-review debriefings for items that the region is still reporting on. For example, a one-page PIP Tips with resources was created when regions were having trouble locating absent parents.

## **Data Software**

The Investigations Team uses software developed by in-house IT staff to enter reading information and generate reports. Data analysis is then exported to Excel. The CFSR Team uses software and a database created by in-house IT. There are numerous reports written into the database, allowing PI Specialists access to the reports they need. Information is searchable by quarter, outcome, year, region, time period, etc.

## **Plan Development and Training**

During the first round CFSR, all regions were required to develop their own local improvement plans. However, the State found these plans difficult to manage. For the second round CFSR, the State has taken an as-needed approach to local improvement plans. Those regions not meeting the standards for an item are required to develop a plan specific for improving that item. The DAPIM model has also been used by those working on the Organizational Effectiveness initiative to assist regions on improving outcomes for specific items.

Data is used to inform the regional trainings facilitated by the CFSR Team. QA Specialists are available to provide trainings on specific QA issues that may arise. A member of the Investigations Policy Team, which often is the QA Team Lead, presents at the Supervisor Basic Skills Development Training class on monthly basis. When the QA Team Lead presents, an objective is to assist new supervisors in understanding how quality is measured by the CPS program. A member of the CFSR Team presents CFSR information and explains the review instrument to all new supervisor basic skills trainings. Both the CFSR and Investigations Teams are asked to review and provide feedback on policies before they are finalized.

## **Systemic Issues**

The CFSR and Investigations Teams do not collect specific data to address systemic issues. The Investigations Team has used data to identify gaps in training needs. The federal CFSR on-site reviews do collect data related to systems improvement and if needed -- as was the case in the CFSR Round Two, add components for action steps related to specific systems related findings as part of the PIP.

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

The CFSR Team uses the read behind technique to help identify data quality issues. If data needs to be corrected, the database is frozen at the end of each quarter to allow time to make corrections. The Investigations Team is able to use regional data staff to correct data. If anomalous or unclear data is identified, Investigations will route this information through the field for corrections.

## **Linking Data Sources**

In both CFSR and Investigations reports, qualitative data is manually correlated with quantitative data.

## **Collaborative Data Analysis Efforts**

The CFSR and Investigations Teams do not collaborate with outside organizations or universities to assist with data analysis.

## **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

### **Internal/External Stakeholders**

The CFSR process involves a multitude of internal/external stakeholders, including the courts,youth, foster care alumni youth, parents, relatives and foster care providers. The Investigations Team only works internally. Stakeholder interviews to look at larger systems issues are not utilized in Texas beyond the CFSR on-site review when a large number of stakeholders are interviewed.

### **Collaboration**

The State Office division of the CFSR Team collaborates with the courts and juvenile justices. The Investigations Team does not collaborate with other organizations or agencies as part of the paper review it conducts, but does participate with courts, juvenile justice and other stakeholders on a regular basis.

### **Privatized Systems**

Texas does not utilize private providers for case management services. The CFSR Team will involve private providers in the CFSR process via stakeholder interviews; if for example, the foster parents are contracted through a private agency.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The Investigations Team is interested in changing the QA reading guides to include a larger focus on safety and family engagement, an issue the State is currently engaged in improving.

## **SUMMARY DOCUMENTS**

[Archive of Investigation QA Questions](#)

[Sample Outcomes Summary Report](#)

[Sample Regional PIP Report](#)

[Structured Case Reading Summary Reports \(template\)](#)