

NRCOI FACT SHEET

Quality Improvement Systems for Child Welfare Agencies

What is Quality Improvement?

Definitions of QI vary for different fields, but for the purposes of child welfare, quality improvement is an ongoing effort, led by the agency, to define, measure, and improve outcomes for children and families. QI activities should involve all levels and types of agency leaders and staff as well as stakeholders, children, youth and families.

At its most effective, QI is a complete system that supports a child welfare agency's values, vision and mission through ongoing data and information collection and analysis and the regular use of QI results to make decisions, improve practice and achieve better outcomes for children and families.

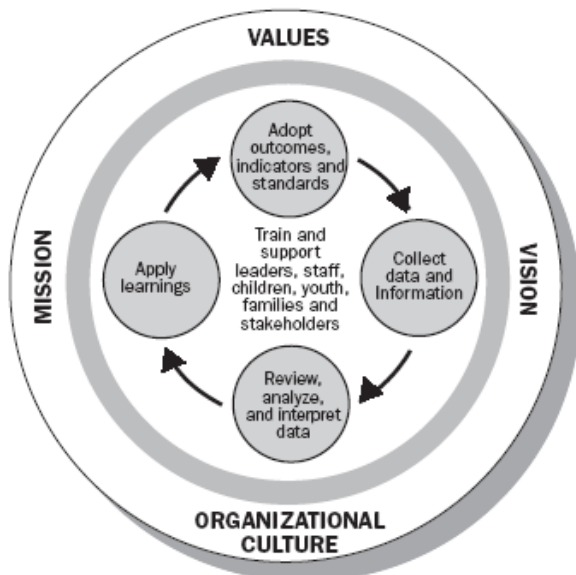
Why is Quality Improvement important?

Child welfare agencies must move beyond using process and compliance measures if they want to improve outcomes for children and families. For years, child welfare agencies relied on quality assurance processes, such as basic data systems, compliance reports, case record reviews and program audits, to assess whether workers met required timeframes and completed their paperwork. As the focus has moved to improving outcomes, the child welfare field has recognized the importance of creating more comprehensive QI systems. These systems involve managers, staff, families and stakeholders; provide targeted, ongoing feedback on practice and outcomes; and include mechanisms for incorporating that feedback into improved practice.

How can the NRCOI help?

The NRCOI provides training and technical assistance to help child welfare agencies develop, implement and refine QI systems and related materials:

- **Agency QI plans:** We can help develop QI plans that organize the QI system, explain it to internal and external stakeholders and link the system to key leadership initiatives.
- **Agency-wide QI kick-off meetings:** NRCOI staff can help develop agendas, exercises and materials for QI kickoffs as well as facilitate the agency-wide meetings with key managers and staff. These meetings explain the importance of QI to improving practice and outcomes and use targeted exercises to improve participants' use of QI results in their work.
- **State Child and Family Services Reviews:** NRCOI staff can help adapt CFSR instruments and processes to create State CFSR systems, train staff and stakeholders on conducting reviews, co-lead pilot reviews, and assist with data analysis and report development.
- **Supervisory review processes focused on outcomes for children and families:** We can help link supervisory reviews to key child welfare outcomes as well as an agency's qualitative review process.



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- **Program Improvement Plan (PIP) measurement strategies:** We can assist in adapting existing data, information and QI processes to support a State's PIP and meet Federal PIP measurement and reporting requirements.

- **QI Advisory groups:** We can provide strategies for engaging internal and external stakeholders in the QI process through QI Advisory groups that review data and information and make policy and practice recommendations.

- **Peer-to-peer connections:** The NRCOI hosts and facilitates conversations and connections among QI staff across the country and can bring in QI staff from other child welfare agencies to share ideas and techniques and help implement new processes.

- **Improved QI reports:** NRCOI staff can review QI reports and make recommendations for improving analyses and/or presentations to increase their usefulness to agency staff.

- **Practice improvements:** NRCOI staff will help agency managers and staff develop strategies and processes through which QI results can drive practice changes.

- **Training:** NRCOI staff can train agency QI staff to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to support QI processes within their agency.

Quality Improvement Resources:

The NRCOI website (www.nrcoi.org) has a number of useful resources focused on QI, including:

- *National QI Peer Network:* quarterly teleconferences with QI staff from around the country
- *Using Continuous Quality Improvement to Improve Child Welfare Practice:* a framework describing the various principles and components of comprehensive CQI approaches
- *QI Corner:* a column in each NRCOI *Child Welfare Matters* newsletter focused on QI issues
- *A Framework for Quality Assurance in Child Welfare*
- Links to QI resources from other child welfare agencies and national organizations

For more information: Contact Peter Watson at the NRCOI, by phone (207-228-8330) or email (pwatson@usm.maine.edu).

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