

## Fresno CQI Meeting

April 13, 2015

### CQI Components Handout

[Adapted from CFSR E-Training Platform, Section 3, CQI in Child Welfare]<sup>i</sup>

#### I. CQI Administrative Structure

A solid foundational administrative structure is a critical component in the development of a well-functioning continuous quality improvement (CQI) system. Strong administrative oversight and commitment by leadership is an obvious element of this component. To illustrate commitment and to promote staff and stakeholder buy-in, leadership should ensure that:

- Agency-wide CQI standards, requirements, policies, and procedures are clear and consistent
- The State possesses or builds the capacity to implement a strong operational CQI system
- There is strong guidance of the CQI program

To be successful, the new systems must create linkages within the entire agency, both vertically and horizontally. By focusing on creating a strong administrative structure, with adequate resources and solid direction, the agency will help ensure the effective functioning and sustainability of its CQI system.

State agencies should have procedures in place that result in a statewide systematic approach to implementing, overseeing, and exercising oversight of the CQI process, ensuring that it is being applied fairly and consistently. There should be a well-articulated, common approach to implementing, reviewing, and adjusting any CQI process.

Some States facilitate CQI by establishing a centralized CQI unit or division that serves as a bridge to connect all areas of the agency, from upper management to support staff. In this case, agencies may assign joint responsibility for monitoring the progress of CQI and any initiatives to both field and central office CQI staff, based on the initiative. Regardless of centralization, an agency will illustrate its commitment to CQI by having designated CQI staff, adequate resources, clearly written procedures, and by expanding its CQI system to go beyond the case review process.

#### II. Quality Data Collection

**Collecting data and ensuring quality** are critically important in a State's efforts to establish a robust continuous quality improvement (CQI) system of data compilation, analysis, and dissemination. The collection of **quantitative and qualitative data** from varying sources is the foundation of a CQI system; a robust connection between administrative data and other sources of information is key to a plausible vision of change. If solid process and outcome data are used to identify strengths and concerns and establish strategies for improvement, and if progress and trends are tracked by repeated measuring, the results can provide management with a simple, visually compelling thermometer of the organization's performance and health at every level and can help the agency see where it wants to go in the future.

All agencies want data that are timely, complete, understandable, and relate to the task at hand. Data must be accurate and relevant before data analysis can yield beneficial results; for this to occur, any issues that exist with **caseworkers and data entry** must be identified and resolved. Furthermore, there must be an efficient process in place for the **resolution of data quality issues**.

An agency's interrelated activities and processes are anchored by the quality of its information systems and their ability to produce accurate, reliable, interpretable data that are consistent in definition and usage across the State and nationally.

### III. Case Record Review Data and Process

A critical component of any agency's continuous quality improvement (CQI) system is the ongoing, periodic review of case files taken from a statewide **case sampling** of children who are or were served under the title IV-B and IV-E programs. These quality assurance (QA) case reviews should be performed by skilled **QA case reviewers** who collect information to assess practice, services, and outcomes for children and families, and to determine whether specific requirements have been met.

Pivotal to gaining a complete picture of the case is conducting case-related interviews, or interviewing various parties involved in the cases. QA case reviews employing a comprehensive **case review instrument** as well as **case-related interviews** will yield meaningful data that can be used to make individual, unit, division, regional, and statewide practice improvements.

Through these thorough case file reviews and interviews, the State can better understand how the agency's policies, procedures, and practices are impacting children and families. Assessment of this detailed case-level data helps in evaluating the quality of services being delivered, and how the agency can better ensure children's ongoing safety, permanency, and well-being. The State's policies and manuals should provide clear guidance for carrying out and completing case reviews.

The QA case review process should:

- Cover the entire State
- Have clear, consistent written policies and processes
- Be underpinned by strong infrastructure
- Include interviews of case participants
- Ensure reviewer skill
- Promote **inter-rater reliability**
- Identify, measure, and clarify practices that guide safety, permanency, and well-being in terms of daily practice

The QA case review activities in all States, whether they are State-administered, county-administered, or privatized States, should take place with consistency and quality statewide, with ongoing involvement and monitoring by the State's CQI oversight division. Case review activities are an integral part of an agency's CQI program as a whole. The meaningful results generated by QA case reviews, considered in conjunction with other CQI activities, will help ensure and sustain high quality services across the agency.

#### IV. Analysis and Dissemination of Data

States have long collected child welfare data from a variety of sources. Of course, the ability to regularly track, categorize, and analyze data varies from agency to agency, particularly as it relates to obtaining information about safety, permanency, and well-being for children. In recent years, though, the advantages of using data have become more apparent to those who use data extensively in managing their organizations. Both [quantitative and qualitative data](#) provide evidence to help take the emotion and guesswork out of decisions that can be difficult. Data from multiple sources can help an agency define its current status versus its desired status; identify its strengths, needs, and trends; and set strategic priorities for reaching desired goals and improving outcomes.

The process of turning data into meaningful information that can be used to make decisions is **data analysis**, sometimes called *analytics*. Analytics has become a critical component of managing performance, which normally involves setting goals, monitoring progress toward meeting the goals through use of specific measures, and making necessary adjustments along the way to improve performance. Developing an “analytics mindset” is a process that evolves over time as staff become more accustomed to managing by data. Increasing **staff and stakeholder access to data** is a crucial element of this mindset.

#### V. Using Data and Information to Make Decisions and Adjustments

Essential to a well-functioning continuous quality improvement (CQI) system is building productive **CQI teams** and ensuring that information generated through the system will be effectively used to make needed improvements. A productive CQI system requires a mechanism that promotes circular feedback and **communication among staff, stakeholders, and teams**. These *feedback loops* permit an ongoing, bi-directional information exchange across all levels of the agency, which in turn facilitates the change process. Equally important is **sharing data with agency staff** and **sharing data with consumers and external stakeholders**.

By sharing data and information and then using staff, stakeholder, and consumer feedback as a starting point, the agency can create a dialogue about improvements it should make in policies, practices, systems, planning, services, and in its CQI program as a whole. Frontline staff, particularly workers and supervisors, will show an increased understanding of how their day-to-day actions, as revealed by data, impact short- and long-term outcomes for children and families, and how their practices can be enhanced as a result. Thus, staff, youth, families, and external stakeholders should receive information and actively participate in analyzing and interpreting data, connecting data to practice, and identifying trends and key findings.

Through this process of **data-based decision-making**, the CQI process as a whole is subject to continued examination and evaluation and can be adjusted as needed to better meet agency needs. This ongoing adjustment is one of the key factors in an agency **maintaining the momentum** of effective systemic change.

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<sup>i</sup> Downloaded on April 5, 2015 from: <https://training.cfsrportal.org/section-3>