

**The CQI Process:
Using the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle
to Improve Outcomes**

HANDOUTS

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Lily Alpert and Yolanda Green-Rogers
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

ChapinHall
at the University of Chicago

The CQI process begins **with a question.**

1. EX. - What is the average length of stay for children in foster care?

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

QUESTIONS ABOUT...

Outcomes	Processes	Quality	Capacity

I observe that	I think it's because	So I plan to	Which I think will result in

WHERE DO YOU GO FOR EVIDENCE?

CQI Phase	Hypothesis Development/ Testing	Evidence Use	What evidence sources help you answer this question?
<p>Plan</p>	<p>Define the problem. ("I observe that...")</p>	<p>What evidence supports this observation?</p>	
	<p>Hypothesize as to the cause of the problem. ("I think it's because...")</p>	<p>What evidence supports this theory of change?</p>	
	<p>Identify a solution. ("So I plan to...")</p>	<p>What evidence supports the hypothesis that this intervention will have the intended effect on the target population?</p>	
	<p>Set a performance target. ("....which I think will result in...")</p>	<p>What evidence supports the hypothesis that the proposed dose of the intervention will lead to this specific degree of improvement?</p>	

KEY TERMS DEFINE

Analysis: The process of converting data to evidence. The most rigorous types of methods and analyses are those that classify as research.

Capacity investments: The financial, human capital, technological, infrastructural, and other tangible resources an agency allocates in order to implement an intervention with fidelity to implementation guidelines and process and quality standards.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): A cyclical process of problem solving activities that requires the deliberate use of evidence. The cycle has stages during which various analytic and decision making tasks are executed: problems are identified; causes are hypothesized; solutions are developed, implemented, and tested; and decisions about future investments are made based on the results of those tests.

CQI system: A coherent set of structures, functions, policies, and procedures that facilitate the CQI process.

Data: Individual pieces of information that a child welfare system collects about the children and families it serves. Data may be quantitative or qualitative.

Evidence: Information that is used to support an observation, claim, hypothesis, or decision. The most reliable evidence is that which classifies as research evidence.

Evidence-based intervention: An intervention that has been shown by scientific research to be effective.

Hypothesis: “A tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences.” In a child welfare CQI context, a hypothesis is a testable claim made about the relationship between a given outcome and its supposed causes or the relationship between a proposed intervention and its expected effects.

Intervention: A change to business as usual designed to bring about change in a specific outcome. In a child welfare CQI context, interventions may be changes in clinical practice, casework practice, administrative strategies, or fiscal strategies.

Logic model: A graphic representation of a theory of change. “Effective logic models make an explicit, often visual, statement of the activities that will bring about change and the results you expect to see for the community and its people.”

Process investments: Investments made as part of an intervention that are designed to improve the process of service delivery (i.e., how services are delivered).

Quality investments: Investments made as part of an intervention that are designed to improve the quality of service delivery (i.e., how well services are delivered).

Research: Scientific methods that are objective, systematic, and open to scrutiny.

Research Evidence: Information produced as a result of research that is used to support an observation, claim, hypothesis, or decision.

KEY TERMS DEFINED

Theory of change: A statement that describes the mechanisms by which a proposed intervention is expected to produce the desired change.

Variation: Observed differences in a given outcome across subpopulations.