

# CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

## The CQI Cycle

### Step 1 - Identify and Understand the Problem:

Using administrative and case review data, we identify the problem and its root cause. We ask things like, "What is the problem, who is impacted by it, and why is it occurring?"

**Step 2 – Research the Solution:** We will explore how to solve the problem. We may ask, "What do we already know about solutions, what has worked for other agencies, and what more can we learn from our own data?"

**Step 3 – Develop the Theory of Change:** A theory of change describes the change needed in the current system to achieve the intended outcome. It's a road map for our CQI work.

**Step 4 – Adapt or Develop the Solution:** Done in collaboration with our partners, we will prepare to implement the solution in our organization by adapting or developing the chosen solution.

**Step 5 – Implement the Solution:** This is often done in stages with initial implementation occurring on a smaller scale to allow for adjustments before full rollout. Fidelity to model is important so we know our results are from the intervention or something else.

**Step 6 – Monitor and Assess the Solution:** Based on our assessment, we may need to make changes or reject the solution entirely if it has been implemented with fidelity but improvements are not being realized.

## What is Continuous Quality Improvement?

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is a comprehensive continuous learning process implemented by an organization to identify, describe, and analyze strengths and problems and then test, implement, learn from, and revise solutions. CQI is:

- A [Philosophy](#), as it places a high value on improvement
- A [System](#), as it is a coherent set of components that supports the continuous improvement process

Simply put, CQI encourages everyone in an organization to ask, "How are we doing, and can we do it better?"

## Key Features of a CQI System

- It is [data-informed](#), systematic, and proactive
- It is [inclusive](#), involving stakeholders and staff at all levels
- It is [holistic](#), incorporating information about multiple aspects of the system and establishing linkages

## Why Does Child Welfare Need CQI?

It is essential for any child welfare agency to have a well-functioning CQI system to accomplish its key goals: Ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and promote the resiliency of families. In the field of child welfare, CQI helps us:

- Evaluate the quality of work with children, youth, and families
- Measure outcomes of the work with children and families (safety, permanency, wellbeing)
- Gather information to guide program improvement efforts, and reinforces best practices in child welfare

## Core Values of North Dakota's CQI Model

The continuous quality improvement process for the North Dakota Child Welfare System requires the involvement of all agency staff and its partners providing child welfare services, children, youth, families, and stakeholders to implement and sustain system transformation. The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services is committed to an organizational culture that understands the purpose and importance of collection and utilization of accurate data in the process of improving the services for children and families. It also needs the commitment at all levels of the organization to the continuous quality improvement philosophy for the process to be successful.

With a commitment *throughout* the public child welfare system to continually improve services, all levels work as one for the continual improvement of the North Dakota Child Welfare System.

**Engaged:** System staff and stakeholders at all levels must have a clear understanding of the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services' child welfare vision and work continuously and collaboratively to achieve and sustain improvements in practice and outcomes.

**Data Informed:** The success of the CQI process is dependent on a commitment by system leadership, staff, and stakeholders to the ongoing use of data and evidence to examine problems and support decision-making across the child welfare system.

**Solution Focused:** CQI activities must be routinely focused on identifying strategies that will best address or solve the underlying issues or constraints that are impacting system and agency performance in terms of case practice, service delivery and child and family outcomes. Strategies must be regularly monitored until the desired results are achieved and modifications made as needed.



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