



Step 7

Implement Continuous Quality Improvement Processes

The checklist below on implementing continuous quality improvement processes is the seventh of eight and is designed to help agencies engage in continuous quality improvement (CQI), the process of systematically monitoring evidence-based practice (EBP) fidelity and progress toward desired outcomes as well as improving outcomes on an ongoing basis. A CQI plan should be implemented alongside EBP implementation to address areas where improvement will enhance outcomes. The CQI plan integrates and builds on the work conducted through this and previous checklists (i.e., fidelity, performance measures, etc.) but allows agencies to focus on the area(s) that are underperforming or not achieving the desired outcomes. The CQI plan can be used to align and improve work processes to support implementation of the EBP.

Use quality assurance procedures to identify areas where more attention is needed to enhance the implementation of the EBP.

1. Are there areas that are not performing as well as expected? These areas can be identified through team processes, information from the process/outcome evaluation(s), quality assurance procedures, and general workflow.

- List the areas of EBP implementation that are underperforming, keeping in mind that addressing micro-level implementation issues (small, manageable items) can help the agency achieve the best outcomes. Remember to narrow the problem so that solving it is doable.
- Convene a small group (8 to 10 people) of staff (of all levels), stakeholders, and program participants (clients) to review and discuss how well the initiative is doing.
- Identify potential areas where improvements might be needed; small or micro-level issues are often easiest to test.

Use the “Plan Do Study Act” (CQI) format to identify work process issues.

2. Is there a neutral facilitator (internal or external) to conduct the CQI meetings?

- Identify a neutral facilitator for the team-based CQI process. In some cases, if there is a program evaluator, this person can also serve as the facilitator, if everyone agrees they should be the facilitator.
- Ensure that the facilitator is knowledgeable about research findings, EBPs, and implementation science.

3. Has a CQI plan been developed and implemented?

- Use the “Plan Do Study Act” CQI format to identify work process issues: Plan: Review the micro-level problem areas; brainstorm ideas. Do: Develop an action plan to adjust how the EBP operates. Study: Ensure the review provides proximal measures; collect the experiences of those involved to make sure improvements are occurring. Act: Decide the course of action based on data and the input and experiences of staff.
- Recognize staff for participating in the CQI process. Ensure that staff feel valued in the process.

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4. Since implementing the CQI process, have benchmarks to assess progress on quality improvement been reviewed on a regular basis?

- Have the implementation team review areas of improvement.
- Brainstorm what can be improved and how, focusing on micro-level issues.
- Collect data about the problem and verify that the “causes” exist in the data and not just in subjective impressions of the problem.
- Refine the problem to reflect the data and the narratives from staff, administrators, and stakeholders.

5. Have options for improving implementation of the EBP been identified?

- After refining the problem, refine the solutions. Ensure that the solutions can be implemented within three to six months and with existing resources.
- Ensure that the solutions are targeted to that problem.
- Pilot the identified solution for improving EBP implementation and monitor benchmarks to see if progress has been made.
- Identify champions who can promote the change in EBP implementation among staff, administrators, and stakeholders.

6. Is there a plan for reviewing any adjustments or refinements made to how the EBP is implemented?

- Review the fidelity and quality assurance measures (benchmarks) to ascertain whether they are useful to define proximal measures.
- Select measures that are easy to obtain, measure short-term outputs, and track them over time.
- Identify a timeline of 6 to 18 months to study the impact and see if improvements have occurred.

7. Has the team identified what worked well and what did not?

- Using the study findings (see the Step 2 checklist), refine the EBP implementation processes.
- Identify features that produced short-term improvements (benchmarks) and those that garnered support from others.
- Refine the agency’s policies and procedures.
- Determine what barriers exist to effective practice now that the identified problem has been addressed.
- Repeat the “Plan Do Study Act” process, if necessary, for another EBP implementation challenge.

Ensure that the CQI groups are sharing results.

8. Are the results of the CQI process being shared among the implementation team and with the interagency workgroup?

- Ensure that the “Plan Do Study Act” process and activities are shared. This helps alert the agency and stakeholders to the process and garners support.
- Communicate with stakeholders about how the system can change based on the results of “Plan Do Study Act.”

Resources

Continuous Quality Improvement [↗](#) is part of a series of coaching packets and provides information on how to ensure quality in the implementation of EBPs to improve outcomes among people in the criminal justice system.

Easy and Powerful Process Improvement for Behavioral Health [↗](#) has several activity sheets, case studies, and materials on process improvement strategies.

Implementation Science Toolkit: Equipping Justice Agencies with the Tools to Facilitate the Change Process [↗](#) provides strategies to help practitioners learn to adopt and adapt evidence-based practices and treatments for their agency and ultimately improve agency outcomes.

Institute for Healthcare Improvement [↗](#) has several courses and other materials for more information about CQI processes in health care settings.

Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts [↗](#) is part of a series of coaching packets and provides information on how to gauge the effectiveness of EBP implementation to improve outcomes among people in the criminal justice system.

Process Measures at the Interface Between the Justice and Behavioral Health Systems [↗](#) provides a set of principles and process measures that can help guide delivery of service between the behavioral health and criminal justice systems.

Solving Puzzling Probation Problems with PDSA [↗](#) provides background and evidence supporting the use of “Plan Do Study Act” (PDSA) and uses community corrections examples to translate ideas for the justice field.



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