Continuous Quality Improvement:
USING DATA & INQUIRY TO IMPROVE LIVES

rootCAUSE

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a process of collecting, analyzing & using data to improve the quality of services or products on an ongoing basis. Put simply, CQI helps teams "get better at getting better."

Over the past fifty years, the practice of CQI has been instrumental in improving products and services in various industries, including manufacturing and health-care. CQI can also be applied to the thousands of social service programs working to improve outcomes for people, from healthy birth, to a quality education, a well paying job, and healthy and secure aging.

Root Cause has developed a holistic approach to strengthening the capacity of social service providers by applying CQI principles in their programs. Our approach enables organizations to:

1. Clearly define intended results and the path to achieve them.
2. Use the best available evidence of what works.
3. Understand the barriers that hinder progress.
4. Use data in real time to decide what actions to take.

Unlike third party evaluations, CQI offers opportunities for ongoing program learning and improvement of day-to-day activities so that services are better delivered and more effective. It leads to professional development for program staff and improved satisfaction among program participants.

The CQI framework below provides the foundation for programs to determine how well they are doing and where to focus and improve their capacity.

CQI Framework For Social Service Programs

1 — Life Outcomes & Indicators

2 — Domains of Program Quality

1. *ACCESSIBILITY*
   How do programs address barriers to participation caused by race, class, gender & geography?

2. *USE OF EVIDENCE*
   How do programs use the best available research to best meet the needs of participants?

3. *TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE*
   How are programs designed to identify and address the consequences of trauma?

4. *FAMILY ENGAGEMENT*
   How are families involved in the planning, development, leadership, and evaluations of programs designed to serve them?

5. *REFERRAL PROCESS*
   How do programs give and receive referrals that lead to seamless service coordination between programs?

3 — Performance Measurement Capacity

1. *CULTURE*
   Successful measurement, learning, and improvement begins with leaders prioritizing and embedding it within the program's culture.

2. *FRAMEWORK*
   A program's hypothesis should rest on sound logic and clear assumptions explaining how and why its activities address a need and produce the outcomes it aims to achieve.

3. *SYSTEM*
   Measurement systems include staff time, processes, and tools to collect, store, analyze, report, and learn from performance data on an ongoing basis.