**Five Whys**

**Instructions**

The Five Whys is a commonly used Root Cause Analysis (RCA) tool. The root cause is the highest-level cause of a problem, or the factor that should be permanently eliminated to see improvement. As with a weed, the challenge must be ‘rooted out’ to prevent it from reappearing in the future. RCA helps identify implementation, programmatic and systems level factors. The Five Whys begin with a problem statement, which could be identified by the team during brainstorming, or one of the causes identified in a Fishbone Diagram. The team asks “why” this problem is present and records their responses. The team will continue to ask why, recording responses for each round. By asking “why” at least five times, the team should get at the root cause for the identified problem. In some cases, the team may generate more than one answer when asking, “why?” The team can either prioritize one response to follow or consider following through the Five Whys with multiple responses. For the latter, use a separate worksheet for each new response as needed.

**Five Whys – Template**



| **Problem Statement** |       |
| --- | --- |
|  | *Why? (1)* |
|  |       |
|  | *Why? (2)* |
|  |       |
|  | *Why? (3)* |
|  |       |
|  | *Why? (4)* |
|  |       |
|  | *Why? (5)* |
| **Root Cause** |       |

These resources were adapted from the work of IPRO, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization for New York State, and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), https://atlanticquality.org/download/508\_7\_1-12-14\_RCA\_Toolkit\_final.pdf; the American Society for Quality. (2018). http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/root-cause-analysis/overview/overview.html; iSixSigma. Determine the Root Cause: 5 Whys. https://www.isixsigma.com/tools-templates/cause-effect/determine-root-cause-5-whys/