

COACHING PACKET

Continuous Quality Improvement

One in a series of Coaching Packets designed to assist jurisdictions in the implementation of effective practices that will support successful offender outcomes

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Coaching Packet Series 1: Creating a Blueprint for an Effective Offender Reentry System

- A Framework for Offender Reentry
- Establishing a Rational Planning Process
- Engaging in Collaborative Partnerships to Support Reentry

Coaching Packet Series 2: Delivering Evidence-Based Services

- Implementing Evidence-Based Practices
- Effective Case Management
- Shaping Offender Behavior
- Engaging Offenders' Families in Reentry
- Building Offenders' Community Assets through Mentoring
- Reentry Considerations for Women Offenders

Coaching Packet Series 3: Ensuring Meaningful Outcomes

- Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts
- Continuous Quality Improvement



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Introduction to the Coaching Packet Series

The Center for Effective Public Policy (the Center) and its partners, The Urban Institute and The Carey Group, were selected by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance to serve as the training and technical assistance providers to the Fiscal Year 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative grantees (hereafter “PRI grantees”). The project team served in this capacity from April 2008 to June 2010.

The Center is a nonprofit criminal justice consulting organization based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Since the early 1980s, the Center has provided training and technical assistance to the criminal justice field on a wide array of topics, including transition and reentry, and has administered a number of national projects of this kind. The Urban Institute was established as a private, nonprofit corporation in Washington, D.C. in 1968 and is a leader in prisoner reentry research, focusing on making best practice information accessible to practitioners and policymakers. The Carey Group is a justice consulting firm with extensive practitioner experience in evidence-based practices, strategic planning, community and restorative justice and corrections.

As a part of its technical assistance delivery to the PRI grantees, the Center developed a series of tools to assist grantees in specific areas of their reentry work. The final products of this work include eleven Coaching Packets in three series. These Coaching Packets offer practical value beyond the jurisdictions involved in this initiative and are available to criminal justice professionals and their partners interested in enhancing their strategies for reducing recidivism and improving offender outcomes.

Each Coaching Packet provides an overview of a specific topic as it relates to successful offender reentry, and offers tools and resources for those interested in exploring the topic in greater depth.

- *Series 1* provides a blueprint for an effective offender reentry system. This series provides a conceptual framework for addressing prisoner reentry at the policy level; outlines a strategic planning process to support implementation efforts; and explores the establishment of successful collaborative partnerships at the policy and case management levels.
- *Series 2* addresses key issues related to the delivery of evidence-based services to offenders. This series summarizes the key literature with regard to implementing evidence-based practices; explores advances in approaches to case management; addresses the important role of staff in changing offender behavior; and summarizes research and practice as it relates to working with women offenders, engaging families, and mentoring.
- *Series 3* provides guidance and tools to ensure that reentry efforts achieve their intended outcomes. This series describes methods to assess the effectiveness of reentry efforts and offers strategies for achieving continuous quality improvement.

FY 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) Grantees

The Prisoner Reentry Initiative (PRI) – intended to support the development and implementation of institutional and community corrections-based reentry programs to help returning offenders find employment and provide other critical services – is a collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). Grants were awarded to state and local corrections agencies by DOJ to provide pre-release and transition services to offenders and were “matched” by DOL grants to faith- and community-based organizations (FBCOs) to provide post-release services, focusing on employment assistance and mentoring.

Thirty-five states received grants in three cycles of the Initiative during Fiscal Years 2006, 2007, and 2008.¹ Of these, 23 FY 2007 PRI grantees received assistance under this project. FY 2007 grants were awarded in the fall of 2007 and implemented from 2008 to 2010; however, some grantees will not complete their activities until 2011. The FY 2007 grantees provided technical assistance under this project included:

- ✓ ALASKA, Native Justice Center
- ✓ ARIZONA, Criminal Justice Commission/ Yuma County Sheriff’s Office
- ✓ CALIFORNIA, Department of Community Services and Development
- ✓ COLORADO, Division of Criminal Justice Services/City of Denver
- ✓ DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Government
- ✓ FLORIDA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ HAWAII, Department of Public Safety
- ✓ INDIANA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ IOWA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ KANSAS, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MAINE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MICHIGAN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ MINNESOTA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEVADA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NEW JERSEY, Department of Corrections
- ✓ NORTH CAROLINA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ OHIO, Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
- ✓ PENNSYLVANIA, Department of Corrections
- ✓ RHODE ISLAND, Department of Corrections
- ✓ TENNESSEE, Department of Corrections
- ✓ VIRGINIA, Department of Criminal Justice Services
- ✓ WISCONSIN, Department of Corrections
- ✓ WYOMING, Department of Corrections

¹ The PRI program will end when the FY 2008 grantees complete their activities.

Acknowledgments

Becki Ney, Principal, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program Project Director. Ms. Ney conceptualized and oversaw the development of the Coaching Packet series.

Madeline M. Carter, Principal, and Rachelle Giguere, Program Associate, Center for Effective Public Policy, served as the key editors for the Coaching Packet series. Ms. Giguere also provided extensive research support to the development of the series.

Introduction to the Continuous Quality Improvement Coaching Packet

The Contents of this Packet

This Coaching Packet provides:

- A definition of continuous quality improvement (CQI) and its distinction from quality assurance (QA);
- An examination of the research supporting CQI processes;
- A six step process for establishing a CQI implementation plan;
- Key CQI targets for agencies working towards a risk reduction outcome with offenders;
- A summary of common CQI processes and tools;
- Examples of specific CQI tools;
- Common obstacles to successful CQI application and tips to overcome those obstacles;
- An aid to developing plans to address identified gap areas; and
- References to additional resources on this topic.

The Intended Audience for this Packet

This Coaching Packet was originally developed to assist grant teams that were established to manage local PRI initiatives. The teams were composed of representatives from institutional and community corrections and faith-based or community organizations involved in the delivery of pre- and post-release services to offenders transitioning from prison to the community. The content of these Coaching Packets has much broader application, however; the information and tools contained within this Coaching Packet can also be used by teams of criminal justice professionals and their partners to assess the status of their efforts in implementing evidence-based practices and effective reentry services to offenders.

This Coaching Packet may also serve as a resource for professionals at all levels who are interested in learning more about this topic.

How to Use this Packet

SECTION I: READ THE OVERVIEW ON CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.

This section of the Coaching Packet provides an overview of the techniques, processes, tools, and tips that, when implemented properly, lead to effective and continuous quality improvement. Review its content and, if the information it contains is applicable to your work and addresses an area in which you feel you need to focus your efforts, use the tool in Section II to assess your jurisdiction's strengths and gaps in your quality improvement efforts.

SECTION II: COMPLETE THE CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COACHING PACKET CHECKLIST.

As a team, complete the Continuous Quality Improvement Coaching Packet Checklist. Based upon the information you read in Section I, consider who may need to be involved so that you are able to answer the questions thoroughly. Complete the checklist as a group and discuss your responses along the way.

- Rate each item listed in the checklist (yes, no, not clear).
- For items where your response is “not clear,” make note of the additional information the team needs to collect in order to be able to rate this item.
- Add additional items that may relate to your jurisdiction’s quality improvement efforts that are not already included on the checklist.
- Develop a consensus-based response for each item on the checklist.
- Once the checklist is completed, consider your jurisdictions’ strengths in the area of continuous quality improvement. Make note of these.
- Next, consider your most significant gaps. Make note of these as well.

SECTION III: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN.

If, after completing the checklist in Section II, your team determines that further work on this topic is necessary or would be helpful, follow the steps below to identify your goals, objectives, and action items, and identify any additional assistance or expertise needed.

Working as a team, review your findings from the Continuous Quality Improvement Coaching Packet Checklist. Specifically:

1. Determine whether, based upon what you have read and discussed, you desire to advance your jurisdiction’s approach to quality improvement.
2. If you determine you have a desire to improve in this area, write a goal statement that reflects where you want to be with regard to improving your current efforts. Your goal might be to “Create a CQI master plan using the Six Step Process,” “Develop CQI processes for three key activities,” or another goal. Using the Action Planning Worksheet in Section III, note your goal in the area of continuous quality improvement.
3. Identify your three most significant strengths in this area and discuss how you might build on those to overcome some of your gaps.
4. Identify your three most significant gaps. For each gap, write an objective. Your objectives might be to “Engage staff in a process of considering key targets for CQI,” “Develop an Exit Survey and administration protocol,” or something else. Note your three objectives on the Action Planning Worksheet.
5. Add the following on the Action Planning Worksheet for each objective:
 - a. The specific sequential steps that must be taken to meet the objective.
 - b. The individual who will assume lead responsibility for this action item.
 - c. The completion date for this action item.
6. Discuss whether additional assistance or outside expertise is needed to successfully achieve any of your action items. For instance, explore whether additional literature, guidance from another practitioner over the telephone, examples of work products from other jurisdictions, or on-site technical assistance would be helpful options.
 - a. For each action item, identify those for which assistance/expertise is needed.
 - b. Identify the type of assistance/expertise needed.
 - c. Prioritize each of these need areas. If assistance/expertise will be limited, for which action items is assistance most needed?

- d. Begin exploring ways to secure the needed assistance/expertise.

How to Seek Additional Information

To download copies of the Coaching Packets, please visit the Center's website at <http://www.cepp.com/coaching.htm>. To obtain further information on the use or content of this or any of the Coaching Packets, or on the 2007 PRI Training and Technical Assistance Program, please contact:

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Section I: Overview of Continuous Quality Improvement

Research and practice have repeatedly demonstrated that implementation of effective tools and practices fall far short of their potential when sufficient quality assurance techniques are not put in place. An agency that provides adequate preparation of and training to staff, and successfully implements proper procedures on the improved practice, will often find over time that the intended practice is either performed inconsistently or not in accordance with the trained procedures. This unwelcome discovery can be mitigated through the establishment of intentional and structured quality checks designed to reinforce desired practices and expose and redirect practices that are out of alignment with the desired behavior.

Definition of Continuous Quality Improvement

Throughout this Coaching Packet the term “continuous quality improvement” or “CQI” will be used to describe a process that, when effectively implemented, can better ensure that a set of desired practices are delivered in the manner they were intended, continuously and over time.

For the purposes of this Coaching Packet,

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is defined as:

A set of professional development opportunities that generate current, specific feedback for the purpose of ensuring that services and practices are delivered in the intended manner.

Quality Assurance (QA) is defined as:

An audit process that retrospectively examines practices for the purposes of identifying and correcting divergence from policy or protocol.

CQI is not to be confused with another term often used to describe similar activities, quality assurance (or QA). For purposes of this document, QA is defined as an audit process that retrospectively examines practices for the purposes of identifying and correcting divergence from policy or protocol. QA is both necessary and invaluable; however, it can create the undesired effect of staff masking deficiencies and/or working toward gaining acceptable scores (i.e., compliance) rather than mastering important skills.

CQI is an approach that is built upon a partnership between the one engaged in the use of the professional skills (hereafter, “staff”) and the individual conducting the CQI process (hereafter, the “CQI coach” or “coach”). Each party is mutually seeking to learn and grow, and to this end, achieve incremental improvements toward the attainment of a more effective outcome. While this Coaching Packet will address some issues common to both QA and CQI, its primary focus is on building and administering effective CQI processes.

Why do CQI? What Does the Research Say?

A. CQI: A COMMON PRACTICE IN OTHER INDUSTRIES

Efforts to improve performance are not new to professional industries. In fact, it is ubiquitous. For example, WalMart and Old Navy use “secret shoppers,” employees or contracted individuals who are unknown to the local store’s staff who pose as customers. Secret shoppers engage in the routine shopping experience, all the while taking note of how they were greeted, the demeanor and helpfulness of staff, the condition of the store and merchandise displays, etc. They identify gradients of customer service, provide direct feedback to the corporate office on the scores, and recommend steps to improve operations. NASA conducts rocket launch and space travel simulations, mirroring conditions in an effort to perfect procedures before putting the operation to a live test. The auto industry performs hundreds of tests to ensure that auto parts are durable and meet safety standards. On behalf of their clients, marketing firms collect customer satisfaction feedback through various techniques including providing samples to potential customers, conducting taste tests, and convening focus groups. Doctors in residency perform hands-on duties and receive ongoing feedback from mentors on their skills and techniques. Major League Baseball’s coaches and proficiency experts examine pitches thrown and bats swung, scrutinize post-game footage, and carefully analyze player’s mechanics to detect even the slightest deviation from perfect form and technique.

Criminal justice should be no different. The correctional system and its allied partners perform a function that arguably has an impact of greater import than baseball players or WalMart store clerks. Indeed, the stakes are quite high in a system where individuals can lose their freedom, victims can lose the opportunity for input and a just outcome, innocent citizens can be victimized, and the potential for long-term risk reduction is lost when the justice system falters in the consistent delivery of research-based knowledge and techniques.

Despite the stakes involved, until recently, corrections and other justice system stakeholders have yet to fully embrace and consistently implement CQI processes. The good news is this is quickly changing in our evidence-based environment.

B. RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR CQI

Research demonstrates that when agencies:

- ✓ Effectively train their staff in administering assessments, improved outcomes result;²
- ✓ Establish internal quality assurance processes, recidivism rates decrease;³

An effective CQI process can help the justice and corrections system achieve important outcomes such as the following:

- ✓ Increased staff skills
- ✓ Increased staff satisfaction
- ✓ Improved confidence in the services delivered
- ✓ Enhanced fiscal responsibility
- ✓ Better public safety outcomes

² A study by Bonta, Bogue, Crowley, & Motiuk (2001) addresses the effectiveness of staff in the administration of assessment tools and demonstrates that training and experience improve the effectiveness (i.e., predictive quality) of assessments.

³ Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002.

- ✓ Modify their approaches based on the results of their quality assurance processes, they realize substantially better outcomes, including improvements in cost-benefits and effect-size results that are four times greater than those of agencies who do not use quality assurance to improve their processes.⁴

Realizing outcomes as significant as these (i.e., reductions in recidivism and improvements in cost-benefit ratios) is not as simple, however, as implementing a new process or providing staff with a one-time introduction to a new skill set. Indeed, new skills and processes take time to fully integrate and may, at least at first, result in reluctance and discomfort among those who are affected by the change. Therefore, agencies interested in improving outcomes must commit to an implementation *process* that ensures that staff receives adequate initial training *as well as* ongoing encouragement, feedback, and coaching designed to improve knowledge, skills, confidence, and competency. In fact, research suggests that the amount of time devoted to the change process is an indicator of whether or not superior results will be derived.⁵

It stands to reason that creating a feedback loop for those delivering direct services will increase the probability that improvements will be made. Therefore, those agencies seeking to achieve incremental improvements in risk reduction should work to establish such processes so as to benefit from the improved results that will likely follow.

Throughout this Coaching Packet we use the term ‘an agency’ to represent the entity interested in conducting CQI activities. These activities can, however, be conducted through a collaborative partnership among two or more entities, including a jurisdiction-wide policy team established to enhance offender reentry services.

C. THE GOALS OF THE CQI PROCESS

The primary goals of a CQI process are to:

- ✓ Create and nurture a work environment that is characterized by an ongoing desire to learn and improve;
- ✓ Identify those practices that are working well;
- ✓ Identify those practices in need of attention and determine the specific enhancements that are needed to support improvements in the quality of service delivery (e.g., staff recruitment; training; coaching; technological advancements; the use of incentives; etc.); and
- ✓ Improve outcomes.

CQI can help an agency to become a true learning organization, where continuous improvement is held in high regard by all. However, to be effective, the CQI process must be directly aligned with the agency’s core mission. Activities – and measures to ensure their effectiveness – that do not relate to the core mission will lead to confusion on the part of staff, likely reflect poor results, and not lend themselves to clear correction methods. For these reasons, *alignment of mission and activities is central to CQI.*

⁴ Carey, Finigan, & Pukstas, 2008.

⁵ Flores, Lowenkamp, Holsinger, & Latessa, 2004.

What Constitutes a CQI Plan?

A CQI plan consolidates the objectives, activities, measures, structures, processes, and methods used to ensure that the resources and practices employed are achieving the desired outcome. It does not need to be complicated or long. In fact, shorter and simpler is usually better (see the section below entitled Tips on CQI). The complexity is in determining what exactly the focus of the CQI process should be. To ensure that attention is paid to the most critical objectives and activities, the following process for developing a CQI plan is recommended.

Developing a CQI Plan: A Six Step Process

CQI should not be implemented without consideration of the other factors influencing an agency such as organizational history, culture, workload, pace of change, available resources, political pressures, leadership commitment, and so forth. For example, putting in place a CQI process when leadership's commitment is tenuous can lead to a multitude of problems. The first consideration, then, is whether the timing and conditions are right. Assuming they are, the following six steps will support the development of an effective CQI plan.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY YOUR BHAG (BIG, HAIRY, AUDACIOUS GOAL)

The first step in developing a CQI process is to ensure (or develop) clarity around what it is the agency (or group of agencies) is attempting to do. In other words, a CQI process first requires clarity around the *core mission, or desired outcome*. Once the core mission is clear, it is possible to isolate the activities that are most fundamental to achieving the mission. These then will become the targets of the CQI process.⁶

James Collins and Jerry Porras described the need for agencies to identify their BHAG (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal). As defined by Collins and Porras, a BHAG is a short, gripping statement of mission that provides clarity about why the agency exists.

A BHAG... "...engages people...It reaches out and grabs them in the gut. It is tangible, energizing, highly focused. People 'get it' right away; it takes little or no explanation."

Source: Collins & Porras, 2002, pp. 113.

For the purposes of this Coaching Packet, it is assumed that the agencies working with offenders have an interest in *reducing the risk* that an individual under community supervision will commit a new offense, both during and after supervision.

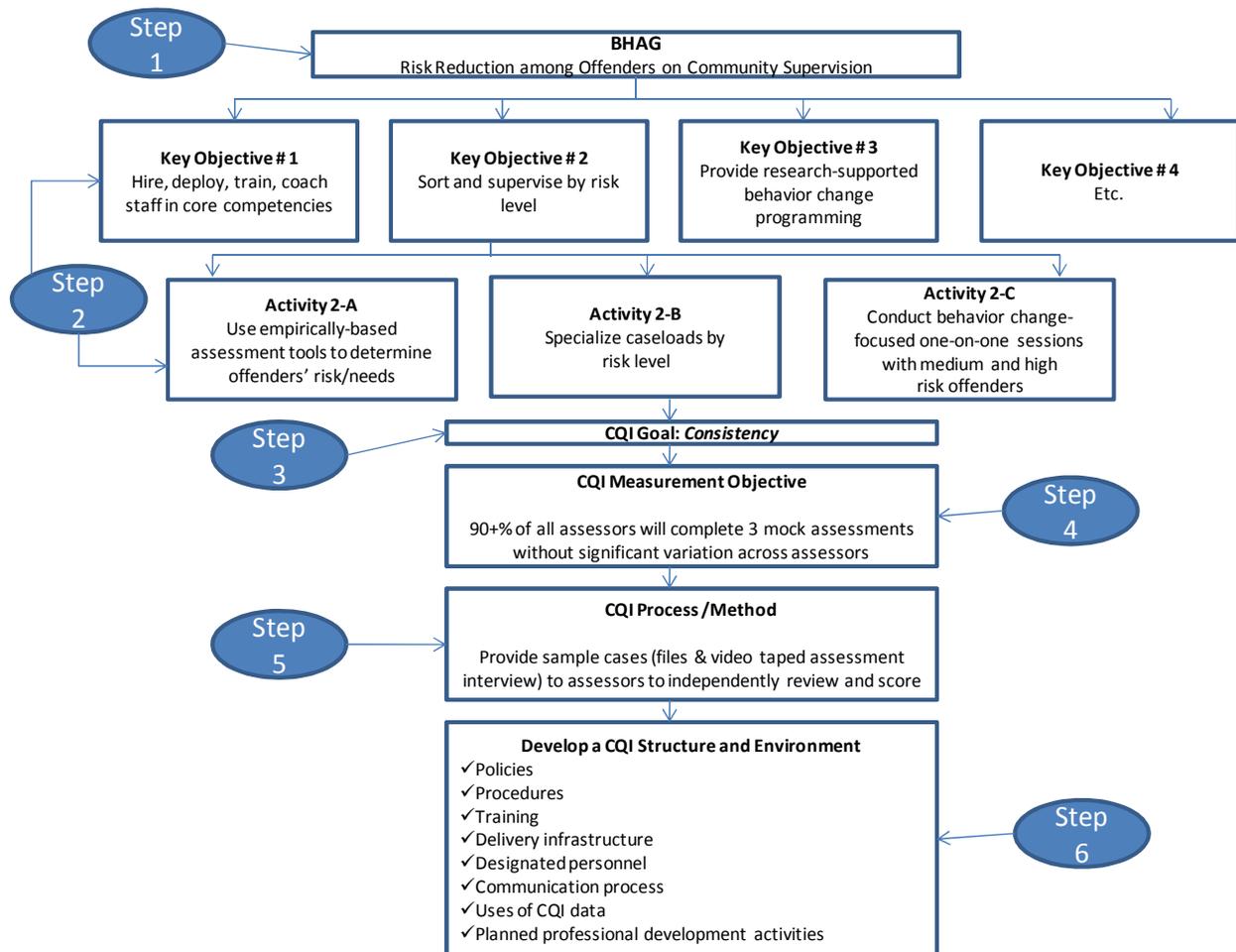
⁶ The 6-step process described herein is compatible with the process of developing a logic model described in Measuring the Impact of Reentry Efforts. For those who have developed a logic model, use the approach described in this process to review the logic model and identify the critical activities that should be the focus of your CQI efforts.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY THE OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES THAT MOST SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE MISSION

There are potentially dozens of functions in any agency that might be considered key to the achievement of its mission. That said, some objectives are decidedly more critical to the achievement of desired outcomes than others. These should be the focus of the CQI process, at least initially.

Michael Porter, Professor of Business at the Harvard Business School, stresses that an agency that seeks superior performance must develop strategic positioning.⁷ This involves the identification of those activities that distinguish the agency as particularly results-producing. Some postulate that 80 percent of the intended BHAG outcomes are derived from 20 percent of an agency’s activities. If this is true, performing CQI meaningfully on the 20 percent of the activities that most significantly contribute to the desired outcomes is likely to produce the best return on investment.

**Exhibit 1:
Example of CQI Activity Analysis**



⁷ Porter, 1996.

The second step in the CQI process, then, is to identify the objectives that are most critical to the achievement of the agency's BHAG, and identify the specific activities involved in the achievement of each objective. Exhibit 1, Example of a CQI Activity Analysis, provides an illustration of what some of these objectives and activities might be for an agency whose BHAG is risk reduction of offenders under community supervision. As this is only an illustration, the example is not fully developed but is provided as a means to illustrate the differences between objectives and activities, and the relationship of the various steps in this six-step process.

STEP THREE: DEFINE THE CQI GOAL FOR EACH CORE ACTIVITY.

The list of key objectives and activities identified under Step Two provides clarity regarding the focus of CQI activities. Next, it is important to determine, for each activity, the goal of the CQI process as it relates to each activity. The measurement goal might be:

- ✓ **Effectiveness:** Ensure high service quality that produces the intended results,
- ✓ **Efficiency:** Maximize the use of resources, and/or
- ✓ **Consistency:** Ensure mastery of skills and reliability across staff.

A CQI process is the method used to determine quality (such as participant feedback or direct observation). It can be formal or informal; time intensive or brief; non-intrusive or intrusive; qualitative or quantitative.

CQI tools are the devices used to support and administer the processes. They are as diverse as the processes themselves (such as checklists, surveys, and audio taping).

Common CQI processes and tools are listed in Exhibit 2.

STEP FOUR: DETERMINE THE CQI MEASUREMENT OBJECTIVE.

Once the activities and their measurement goals are clear, the next step is to determine the measurement objective. The illustration in Exhibit 1 reflects a determination that the measurement goal of "consistency" is important to the use of empirically-based risk/needs assessment tools. In this hypothetical, the agency might then determine that the CQI target is for 90% (or more) of the agency's assessors to complete a mock assessment without significant variation from each other (i.e., inter-rater reliability).

Each key activity should have an equally specific CQI goal and objective, with a clear target and statement that describes what the process is designed to measure.

STEP FIVE: DETERMINE THE CQI PROCESS/METHOD.

The next step is to identify or develop the CQI process (or method) and tools that will best accomplish the measurement objective. There are many tools from which to choose including checklists, surveys, self-assessments, pre/post tests, audio tapes, video tapes, direct observation, and so forth. A variety of tools and approaches are presented in this Coaching Packet to stimulate ideas. Each process and tool has distinct advantages and disadvantages and therefore must be carefully considered. For example, surveys might be a good method to assess whether offenders feel as though the supervision (or treatment) agency environment is respectful, but may not provide an accurate assessment of the degree to which an offender's top criminogenic needs were effectively addressed. Similarly, reviewing an audio or video tape is less intrusive than having a person unknown to the offender sit in on a session, and it allows

for repeated observation of the same session for more precise review. On the other hand, it also introduces potential technological and logistical challenges around acquiring appropriate space, accessing equipment, repairing equipment when it fails, and addressing data privacy issues (such as in the instance of taping), in addition to the fact that the observer is less likely to pick up on non-verbal cues in the way they might if they were physically present during the session. For these reasons, key activities must be isolated and carefully considered and separate CQI measurement objectives and processes established for each.

Exhibit 2: Common CQI Processes and Tools			
CQI Process Examples		CQI Tool Examples	
Process	Purpose	Tool	Description
Auditing	To monitor whether policies and protocols are followed	Case audit	A paper or electronic review of a case to ensure that minimum performance expectations are met; usually checklist-driven
Participant feedback	To determine the degree to which the experience of the participant matches the goal of the activity from the participant's point of view	Survey	Written survey administered to participant (may also be administered to collateral parties, referral sources, or others)
		Focus group	Structured, facilitated, and guided discussion with a group of individuals to gain insight into their experience
		Self-administered pre/post testing	Written test given before and after a lesson or a period of instruction to determine whether the participant has gained knowledge, awareness, and/or skills
Direct observation of one-on-one or group session	To determine the effectiveness of a specific set of activities and enable the provision of first-hand feedback and coaching around the skill area	Checklist (used through direct observation or by viewing video/ audio tapes)	An instrument with a predetermined set of questions, accompanied by a scoring scale, used to record the presence or absence of specific conditions or skills
		Video tape	A less intrusive method of observation; provides opportunity to visually observe interaction
		Audio tape	A less intrusive method of observation; only allows for observation of verbal communication
Training assessments	To ensure the reliability and validity of risk/need assessments	Inter-rater reliability booster session (can also use other methods such as case file review or observation)	Assessors are provided with the same case information (in writing or electronically, by video/audio tape) and complete an assessment; scoring is compared and disagreements are discussed and compared with training guide for clarification

STEP SIX: DEVELOP A STRUCTURE TO DELIVER THE CQI PROCESSES.

CQI procedures need to be carried out with an organizational structure. This structure consists of policies, procedures, forms, training, and a delivery infrastructure. A delivery infrastructure involves the assignment of personnel to carry out CQI. Many agencies use peer coaching and CQI committees made up of direct service staff in order to promote the concept that learning and high standards for excellence is everyone’s job and not just that of the supervisor/ administrator. In addition, the delivery infrastructure should anticipate and address a variety of other issues including but not limited to the following: how CQI outcomes will be used; how CQI findings will be communicated; how deficiencies will be addressed; who will administer the tools and how often; how and if CQI will affect performance evaluations; how other organizational components will be informed and shaped by the CQI results, such as training, human resources (recruiting and hiring), and budgeting (resource allocation), etc.

Finally, it is critical to conduct CQI in an open environment, communicating clearly its purposes, targets, and methods; to provide rewards, incentives, and affirmations to staff throughout the CQI process; and to have in place the professional development activities that will be used to enhance competencies. Timely and specific feedback to those who are involved in conducting the key activities that are the focus of CQI, and the provision of supports to build skills and confidence through a strengths-based approach, are critical to establishing a culture of continuous improvement.

Potential Targets for CQI in Corrections

Since the purpose of this Coaching Packet is to help agencies develop CQI processes that address risk reduction, this section will illustrate some of the more common areas for which a CQI process might be put in place. While the potential areas are plentiful, restraint is recommended. Consideration should be given to limitations around resources and organizational capacity to establish, master, and maintain these processes.

**Exhibit 3:
Example: Risk Reduction Activities and CQI Activities**

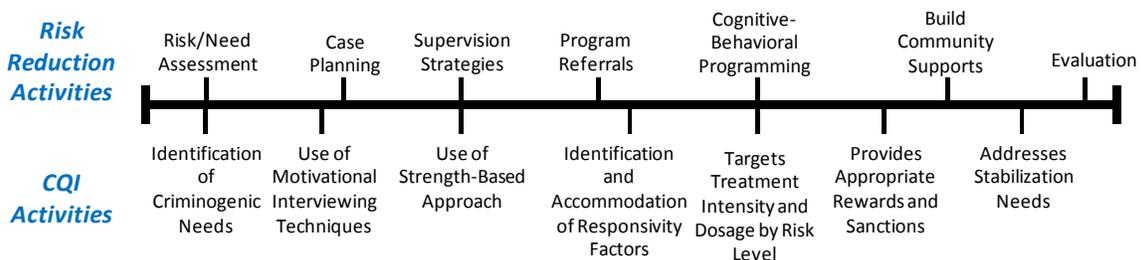


Exhibit 3 illustrates only some of the areas and techniques used to address risk reduction. Each could potentially be assessed by one or more CQI or QA processes. Ideally, each activity would have one (or more) accompanying CQI/QA activity(ies). But given the fact that resources are limited – and the fact that some activities contribute more to outcomes than others – it is recommended that an agency’s approach to CQI begin by focusing only on the fundamental processes, with an eye toward expansion as comfort levels, needs, and resources permit. Some of the core risk reduction activities that require CQI processes include:

- ✓ **Assessment:** Ensure that empirically-based assessment instruments are properly administered; consistently applied across assessors; and used in the manner for which they are intended.
- ✓ **Case management:** Ensure that Case Plans are directly linked to assessment findings; match length, dosage, and intensity of intervention to risk level; address three or more of the most significant criminogenic needs; account for individual offenders’ unique responsivity factors; build on offenders’ strengths; identify and address triggers; and reflect ongoing review and modification based upon changes in risk/need and offenders’ progress towards meeting stated goals and objectives.
- ✓ **Cognitive behavioral programming:** Ensure that programs use cognitive-behavioral techniques; are administered in accordance with the author’s logic model; address offenders’ individual risk factors; vary in intensity and duration according to risk level; and are staffed by skilled facilitators.
- ✓ **Core correctional practices, relationship building, and Motivational Interviewing:** Ensure that staff role model and reinforce prosocial behavior; interact with offenders in ways that increase motivation and encourage choices and problem solving; effectively address anti-social attitudes and behavior; teach concrete problem solving skills; use practice sessions; effectively use affirmations, incentives and sanctions; deflect power struggles; and advocate on offenders’ behalf when appropriate.

Additional activities may be considered, however for the purposes of this Coaching Packet, our focus will be limited to these four key risk reduction areas.

Exhibit 4 illustrates a partial example of a CQI/QA plan focused on these four components of risk reduction. The processes and tools listed in the plan are discussed in greater detail later.

**Exhibit 4:
CQI/QA Plan: Sample of Selected Items**

Objective	Measuring	Activity	CQI/QA/Fidelity Measure	Process Selected
Sort and supervise by risk level	Consistency and Effectiveness	Assessors score the risk/need assessment accurately; staff apply the results appropriately	90% of assessments are completed with 100% accuracy	Supervisor randomly reviews ten cases per caseworker per quarter
			90% of assessors complete the assessment the same way	Inter-rater reliability training assessments conducted quarterly
Resource management	Efficiency	Assessors administer a brief screening tool to initially sort risk levels	95% of low risk cases do not receive a full assessment; 98% of medium/high risk cases (determined by the brief screening tool) receive a full assessment	Monthly case file review
Long term offender behavior change	Effectiveness	One-on-one and group sessions focus on behavioral practices that have been demonstrated to reduce reoffense rates	Offender's top three criminogenic needs are addressed prior to discharge in 75% of cases; drop in risk scores over time; increased GED attainment rates	Case audit
			Staff consistently use role modeling and behavioral practice sessions; staff devote the majority of their session time to criminogenic needs	Direct observation

Common Obstacles and Potential Solutions

Continuous Quality Improvement processes take time and skill to administer. Day-to-day demands and disruptions challenge an agency's resolve to ensure that services are administered effectively and in the manner in which they were intended. Given the correlation between CQI and outcomes however, it is imperative that agencies find ways to overcome these challenges. The following section discusses some of the more common among these challenges. The section entitled Ask the Experts provides guidance on addressing some of the more vexing of these obstacles.

Perception. Natural resistance can be expected if the CQI process is perceived as designed to catch staff "doing wrong." Fear of failure can exhibit itself in many ways, including and especially overt resistance. The messages to staff about the CQI process must be carefully crafted and staff should be given many opportunities for discussion and involvement before implementation begins. Regardless of its specific content, the framing of the message should emphasize *learning*.

Staff discomfort. Individuals working in corrections agencies are not accustomed to “clinical oversight” in the way that other professionals are. In fact, in many agencies, corrections and supervision officers in particular often see themselves as independent operators with their own caseload, who are expected to exercise decisionmaking based solely on their experience and good judgment and the occasional interaction with a supervisor. Given the compelling research on effective staff-offender interactions, it is more important than ever that CQI become an integral part of all staff-offender interactions.⁸ Instituting processes that will result in observation of what were once private interactions with individualized approaches will undoubtedly create discomfort until it becomes routine.

Time. CQI takes time. Community supervision staff often have large caseloads and even larger workloads. Implementing CQI necessitates that supervisors have reasonable staff-supervisor ratios (preferably no greater than 8:1) to enable them to provide feedback and coaching. Insufficient time is perhaps the most commonly reported obstacle to CQI. In some cases, it is a valid issue and workload should be addressed before CQI processes are implemented. In others, it is a mask for other concerns such as perception problems or staff discomfort. Understanding the root of the concern will be important before effective solutions can be devised.

Monotony. Any process that is repeated over and over can get stale, become perfunctory, and lose its perceived value. CQI processes need to stay fresh. This may require modifying the methods (e.g., changing CQI methods, tools, coaches). Monotony can also be addressed by decreasing CQI efforts with those persons who have mastered the necessary skills. In fact, these individuals are perhaps well suited to become mentors or coaches themselves.

Lack of commitment to learning. It is common for an agency to determine that CQI should be a priority, push hard for implementation, only to change focus to something else just as quickly. CQI will generate learning opportunities only if the agency is truly committed to seizing them. It is a means to an end (learning and improved services). Processes should be put in place to maximize learning such as discussing results in individual sessions, scheduling booster trainings, modifying training plans, and brainstorming ideas at staff meetings. Becoming a learning organization has more to do with embracing a philosophy than accomplishing a task.

Data privacy. Some CQI methods will raise data privacy concerns (particularly if the CQI processes cross agency boundaries). For example, offenders may object to audio/video taping or raise concerns about anonymity on survey instruments. These and other concerns should be explored and considered before implementation.

Union concerns. Labor unions may have concerns about how CQI processes affect their members. Will the results of CQI be used to admonish or penalize staff? What rights do the employees have regarding taping? For those jurisdictions with unions, open discussions are recommended before any action is taken. In areas without unions, it is recommended that

⁸ Bonta, Rugge, Scott, Bourgon, & Yessine, 2008.

leadership have these same conversations with staff, both to prevent problems but also to facilitate an environment of open exchange.

Technology. Some CQI methods and tools require technological support, whether audio/video recording equipment, automated software for offender self-testing, or equipment such as one-way observation mirrors. Before a decision is made on the CQI plan, technological questions and resources should be explored.

Logistics. In addition to technology, CQI can create logistical considerations such as the availability of quiet, private space (for taping), rooms large enough for a third person to unobtrusively observe one-on-one sessions, or determining how to conduct CQI when the contacts are predominantly held in the field. Staff should be engaged in the process of identifying and determining how best to address these challenges.

Lack of in-house expertise. Some CQI techniques require a specific type of expertise. For example, something as simple as a survey can offer complications: reliability and validity may depend upon question construction; sampling sizes, literacy concerns, administration methods (by mail, in person) and processes designed to ensure anonymity must all be considered. For these kinds of reasons, consideration must be given as to whether in-house expertise is available – or external expertise is needed – to ensure the effectiveness of the CQI plan.

Under-skilled coaches. In addition to the expertise noted above, CQI relies heavily on other kinds of expertise. Those coaches conducting direct observation, for example, must have the requisite knowledge and skills to adequately evaluate the effectiveness of another or to provide feedback and coaching. These are not naturally occurring knowledge bases or skill sets and the efficacy of the process will be jeopardized if designated coaches lack expertise themselves. In fact, a CQI process for coaches should be put in place as well, ensuring that periodically their competencies are evaluated and opportunities for skill advancement is provided.

Link to performance evaluation. CQI presumes that the primary goal is to become a learning organization and continually improve services. A common mistake made by well-intentioned agencies is to tie the CQI process to performance evaluations. While that may make sense from an organizational structure point of view, it may very well create another set of challenges. It may result in staff working hard to mask skill deficits or to seek to “look good and score well” rather than embrace opportunities to identify areas of improvement and gain further proficiency.

Implementing too few or too many processes. One of the greatest challenges is in knowing how far to go with CQI. Many failed efforts resulted in an agency seeking to implement too many processes and tools too quickly, only to be left with process-fatigue, poor CQI administration, and/or staff resistance. Others have implemented so few processes that the areas measured have turned out to be scarcely relevant, all the while creating a false perception that service delivery is well understood. The initial CQI plan should address a few of the major activities that are most directly related to achieving the BHAG; others can be incrementally included in due time.

Ask the Experts

Three national experts on CQI were interviewed to answer those gnarly questions that inevitably arise as correctional agencies seek to implement CQI processes. They were asked questions put forth by a group of correctional officers, supervisors, and managers that were in the beginning stages of planning for CQI.⁹ One of the experts is a consultant on evidence-based practices, another is a director of a correctional agency that has employed CQI techniques for a number of years, and a third oversees the CQI processes in a large non-profit organization that works with correctional clients in both in-patient and out-patient settings. They are:

- ✓ Sally Kreamer, Director of the Department of Correctional Services, Iowa Fifth Judicial District
- ✓ Kim Sperber, Chief Research Officer and former CQI Manager at Talbert House, Ohio
- ✓ Bill Woodward, private consultant and Director of the Training and Technical Assistance, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence University of Colorado

I. GIVING FEEDBACK

Q1: Hearing what you may have not done so well can be difficult. What is the best way to give feedback to staff on quality?

A: “We should give feedback to our staff in the same way we do with offenders: be specific, be factual, be behavior-oriented. Keep the judgment out. Avoid unnecessary confrontation. They need to know that you want them to be successful on the job.”

A: “Simple. Focus on the positive and reinforce it.”

A: “If you get resistance, find out why. Ask them, ‘What scares you the most about this? What are the barriers? How can I best help you?’”

A: “Be a good listener. In fact, ask them. Ask them how they would like to receive feedback; how is it best delivered and received for them.”

A: “You need to be comfortable coaching others or you will not be effective.”

Q2: What would you be sure not to do when giving feedback?

A: “Don’t address individual problems in a group setting.”

A: “Don’t call the person into your office or you will put them on the defensive immediately. Instead, find a neutral setting and then set the tone for the conversation. If you are the type of person that tends to drop the hammer on people and not listen to what they say, you will put people on the defensive.”

Q3: How can supervisors individualize their approach to staff given their individual differences, skills, and performance?

⁹ Interviews were conducted by telephone and responses are provided in the summary below. For most of the responses, quotes are used; in other cases, summary statements are provided.

A: "Above all else, be respectful. Treat them like a professional. Find out their strengths and what motivates them. Encourage them in their strength areas and don't forget to recognize and reward them for the good work they do. Address issues they have immediately, and don't let them off the hook because you are too afraid to confront them or have allowed them to wear you out."

A: "You need to develop a good relationship with each employee so that there is mutual respect."

A: "Be open, thoughtful, and listen, listen, listen. Don't shut them down."

A: "There are a number of tools an agency can use to help know how to approach their staff most effectively such as the use of group assessment tools (e.g., colors, FIRO-B, etc.), 360 assessments, and contracting with others for assistance. All of these techniques build on strengths."

II. STAFF DISCOMFORT AROUND ROLE PLAYS

Q4: How can an agency set up expectations that staff will routinely conduct practice sessions (e.g., role plays) and to help supervisors conduct practice sessions with staff as teaching tools when staff often report high levels of discomfort with these techniques?

A: "You can't get around the discomfort, nor should you expect to. It will always be there for some people. It is a natural part of life. The same is true with offenders. What you should do is to openly acknowledge that this may make them feel uncomfortable but that the more they do it, the easier it will get."

Q5: What tips do you have for an agency that is trying to reduce this discomfort so that it is accomplished more routinely?

A: "We can make it easier for everyone through our own demeanor, the tone in our voice, creating that inviting environment of trust, making others feel safe. It's kind of like the kid who doesn't want to play soccer because they are afraid. They don't know anyone; they don't know what to do. Once you make them do it, after awhile they love it. But don't expect it quickly. You need to be supportive, understanding, and flexible while they are getting used to the idea of doing something they don't think they like."

A: "You should train them on how to conduct role plays. You want to create a culture in your agency where role plays are commonly done. A Train-the-Trainers course could be conducted to create high levels of mastery; then make sure role plays are replicated in most training events."

A: "I would provide coaches for staff so that they receive ongoing feedback from their coach on how they are doing and how they can improve."

A: "It is important for the agency to reinforce practice sessions in lots of different settings. For example, I sprinkle role plays in our staff meetings. They are quick, short practice sessions of maybe three minutes in length. It does not need to be elaborate and can be spontaneous."

III. ROLE OF SUPERVISOR IN THE CQI PROCESS

Q6: How can a supervisor best help their staff make the most of their one-on-one sessions with offenders so that they are using the processes that result in reduced recidivism?

A: "It starts at the top. If your supervisor is doing the things that are expected of staff then you will eventually turn most staff around. Everything is learning by example. If the people you report to are not modeling this behavior then you will think it is ok not for you to do it."

A: "We need to train supervisors first. They need to master the skills if they are going to be able to coach the staff they work with. If the supervisor does not know what to look for in order to guide staff, how can they perform this function well?"

A: "I believe EBP speaks to immediacy. As soon as you see a staff person conducting themselves inappropriately with an offender, then I would take them aside and do a role play. It's fresh, they can connect with what you are saying and at the same time understand they could have done things differently. Waiting until weeks later to role model can be lost on the individual. Again, you are role modeling for your staff and they will turn around and address the offender immediately and role play with them more effectively."

A: "I would use observational audit checklists, preferably around the items that matter the most such as Motivational Interviewing, reinforcing prosocial attitudes, use of incentives, etc. These are the anchors they should be looking for and the tools should reflect a few of these anchors."

Q7: What are simple ways to do CQI where the agency does not overwhelm supervisors or make the process too unwieldy?

A: "I would start small; maybe do one CQI per month per staff member. Then, I would stop assessing that staff person when they become proficient. At that point, just a spot check on occasion will be sufficient."

A: "In our agency, supervisors spend one full day per month doing case audits. The Director then audits the auditors. Once a person is proficient at one thing, then we raise the bar. Don't expect them to get it all at once. Don't ask them to do something they are not yet skilled at. Think of it in terms of incremental progress."

A: "We have created specialties. One person audits all the risk/need assessment tools because she excels at it. Another just does case file audits."

A: "Build on one or two measures per year but don't do more than you can handle. Go slow and build."

A: "The way to ensure supervisors are good at coaching is to make sure that you promote line staff who have mastered the skills you are asking them to coach others on. Coaching is a complex skill and you have to know the subject matter well."

A: "CQI should be integrated into the supervisor's job. You might need to take some other things away so they have time to do it. Furthermore, it does not all have to be done by supervisors. Direct service staff can do some of this if they have time."

IV. CREATING A CQI CULTURE

Q8: How can the agency create a culture of quality where all staff seek to steadily improve skills?

A: “This is the hardest part of CQI. You want to create a learning organization where the culture promotes continuous improvement. You want to create curiosity. Don’t separate learning from the work. Use staff meetings to promote learning, not just share agency information. It takes many layers of effort to create a culture and it can’t just be a supervisor’s duty.”

A: “Creating a culture around CQI requires participation. When staff participate and help to build the process, they are more likely to want to do it and do it right.”

A: “Consider establishing supports such as establishing a CQI Committee. In some cases you may want to use peer coaching. While this will help create more in-house expertise and shared responsibility while creating a fuller CQI culture, there are a few drawbacks to consider. First, staff usually have workload issues and this can’t just get added to an existing full workload. Secondly, when supervisors provide CQI they are more likely to emphasize it and take ownership of the issues and challenges that arise. Lastly, if supervisors are not fully involved they could ignore or even sabotage efforts by staff.”

A: “Change the way you do job interviews. Role plays should be a part of every job interview. It helps you see the actual skill level and sets the tone for the eventual hire. If they get the job they know that this is what the agency is all about.”

A: “I would make sure that the agency puts into policy that practice sessions are the way it does business and that it will be expected of all employees to utilize these learning tools.”

A: “I would not tie performance evaluation to quality assurance, at least not early on. Don’t tie it to performance raises. You want to create opportunities for growth and openness. However, after staff have had time to master the skill, I would do it then. At that point, it is not optional. It is how we do our business.”

A: “The agency needs to develop a structure to support the use of practice sessions. Is it showing up in the case notes? Is there a way to track the use of role plays?”

A: “I would caution against making the process too routine. If it is routine people get used to it and then they tend to stop learning.”

V. GETTING STARTED – FIRST STEPS

Q9: What advice do you have for an agency that is just getting started with CQI?

A: “Make sure coaches are trained on the things they are monitoring. If there is a CQI process on cognitive behavioral group facilitation, the coach needs to be well trained in this in order to know what to look for.”

Q10: In what areas should an EBP agency ensure CQI processes are in place?

A: The following represents a list of areas identified by the three experts:

- ✓ Cognitive behavioral training facilitation skills

- ✓ Program features in alignment with research
- ✓ Motivational Interviewing
- ✓ Case plans
- ✓ One-on-one interactions (i.e., core correctional practices such as role modeling, skill practice, affirming prosocial behavior/attitudes, redirecting antisocial behaviors/attitudes, homework assignments, relapse planning)
- ✓ Proper use of incentives
- ✓ Treatment dosage based on risk level
- ✓ Proper use of sanctions

Q11: What processes would you use to monitor the quality of service delivery?

A: All three experts indicated that a mix of processes should be put in place, noting that each serves a different purpose and has advantages and disadvantages. The following were identified as offering the most promise:

- ✓ Case audits
- ✓ Direct observation
- ✓ Video taping
- ✓ Audio taping
- ✓ Checklists
- ✓ Session surveys
- ✓ Exit surveys
- ✓ Pre/post testing

“Frankly, I think you can do quality improvement by just making sure that we keep our doors open and listen to each other. There are things you can put in place that increase the odds that you will hear and see the quality of the service being delivered....

...For example, supervisors could be in offices at the same location as the direct service staff, allowing them to listen to conversations, and provide positive affirmation when high quality skills are demonstrated. You want to observe these things naturally. It requires us to be alert and intentional....

...It is CQI by ‘walking around’.”

Q12. It is interesting that you said exit surveys. Don’t you think that asking an offender about the quality of their supervision experience will result in false information? Sometimes they need strictness and accountability, but they will not necessarily see it that way.

A: “It is not so much that you are asking them if they liked their supervising officer but rather you want to know if they felt as though they were treated respectfully, had a good relationship, were listened to, and focused on the things that mattered. You will find patterns in the exit surveys that will tell you a lot about how well officers connect to individuals and whether they are fair and effective.”

A: “Exit surveys are a good way to find out whether the offenders are doing role plays. It should show up in the survey responses.”

Tips on CQI

Many lessons have been learned by agencies implementing the CQI process. The following are some of the principles that should underlie a CQI process.

1. ***Simple to administer.*** To facilitate ease of use, the CQI process and tools should be focused, short, and easy for staff to use.
2. ***Integrated into existing processes and technologies.*** To the extent possible, the CQI process should be compatible with an agency's current practices. For instance, if the use of paper checklists is customary for staff, the CQI process should be similarly adapted. If, on the other hand, an automated system of CQI fits better into current processes, then newly developed CQI materials should be adapted accordingly. The goal is to make CQI as seamless as possible so as to avoid additional burdens on staff.
3. ***Focused on improving rather than auditing processes.*** The way in which agencies present CQI to staff is critically important. CQI is an opportunity to identify ways to improve agency outcomes and to support staff members' professional development; it is *not* a method to identify shortcomings and penalize staff for those shortcomings.
4. ***The responsibility of the entire organization.*** The responsibility for quality improvement does not rest with leadership or a person(s) tasked with this function. Instead, CQI is the responsibility of the *entire* organization (i.e., administrators, managers, individual staff members). Agencies should find ways to engage all staff in the CQI process, whether through committees, designation of coaches, mentors, informal peer-to-peer consultants, or through other means.
5. ***Supportive of an organizational culture dedicated to learning.*** Agencies engaged in evidence-based practice are those that are dedicated to improvement through increased information and knowledge development. CQI is a process that supports ongoing information collection in service of continually improving outcomes.
6. ***A process that results in ongoing skill development.*** "Continual" quality improvement explicitly emphasizes the fact that new processes and skills cannot be effectively implemented and maintained over time without ongoing support. Skills should be reinforced on an ongoing basis through a variety of means, including periodic "booster" training sessions that are designed to address issues identified through the CQI process. In addition, the CQI process should remain original and creative. When one process becomes mundane, the method/tool/process should be modified to maintain staff engagement.
7. ***A means to identify and celebrate success.*** Affirmation is a powerful influence in maintaining a desired course of action. Agencies should work hard to identify individuals through the CQI process who are meeting or exceeding expectations – as well as those who are working hard to meet them – and positively reinforce their actions and/or results.

Examples of CQI Tools and Processes

A myriad of CQI tools are used throughout the country, with the type and content as varied as the number of jurisdictions working with offenders. CQI tools are typically developed in

consideration of the local agency's mission, needs, staff skill level, available resources, etc. As such, there is no such thing as "the right tool."

Many tools are highly specialized, examining a discrete skill area, such as those developed to assess skills in Motivational Interviewing. That said, there are many similarities among the available tools. This means that agencies do not need to start from scratch in developing their CQI tools.¹⁰

The tools included in this Coaching Packet are illustrative of the kinds of measures and processes that are commonly used and as such, can be considered prototypes; local adaption is invited and expected. For simplicity sake, the tools included here are fairly general; address qualitative measures around risk reduction techniques; are easy to administer; and use similar scoring devices. In each case, implementation of these or similar tools would require an accompanying manual that provides the user with specific guidelines on observed measures and the scoring of each item.

As all tools are not equal in their length, comprehensiveness, ease of use, empirical basis, etc., each agency will have to determine the extent to which they want to explore tools available on the open market (both public domain and proprietary) or develop their own in-house tools.

AUDITING.

Auditing is one method of assessing the extent to which staff members are consistently following agency policy and practice expectations; using the strategies and techniques that have been identified as most effective in meeting agency goals (e.g., evidence-based practices); and delivering services in the manner intended. Auditing is typically accomplished through the use of case file checklists.

File audits are inherently limited due to the fact that they can only evaluate the presence or absence of a measure as recorded in documentation (i.e., case file), and do not provide for a qualitative review of the activities recorded. For example, a CQI coach may determine through a case file review that a staff member addressed a priority criminogenic need area and engaged the client in a series of practice sessions in core skill areas. However, the CQI coach will not be able to determine the quality of these activities without observation. A related limitation pertains to the fact that only activities thoroughly documented can be measured; therefore, the comprehensiveness of staff members' documentation is critically important. Yet despite these limitations, case file audits do provide an important opportunity to efficiently determine whether staff is complying with expectations around a host of processes and techniques. Exhibit 5 is a sample Case File Audit Checklist designed to assess the implementation of risk reduction protocols. The frequency and number/percent of cases that should be audited is hypothetical; these should be determined through agency policy. A suggested guideline is to audit ten percent of a case worker's caseload twice per year.

¹⁰ A number of resources are available that contain logic model descriptions and examples of CQI and QA tools. See, for instance, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2005) and Howe & Joplin (2005).

**Exhibit 5:
Case File Audit Checklist**

Measure	Target: Percentage of Cases in Which Activity is Applied	5 = On Target 4 = Largely on Target 3 = Partially on Target 2 = Largely Not on Target 1 = Not on Target				
Intake/Assessment						
Risk/need assessment completed	90%	1	2	3	4	5
Responsivity factors identified	80% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Strengths identified	50% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Triggers identified	75% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case Plan and Case Management						
Case plan completed	90% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan contains top three criminogenic needs	90% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan included family participation where possible and appropriate	20% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan includes trigger(s) and relapse plan	75% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan goals meet the SMART guidelines	75% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan developed with offender input	90% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan includes offender signature	90% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Program intervention matches risk, need, and responsivity factors	75%	1	2	3	4	5
Program intervention sequenced properly with emphasis on the drivers and top criminogenic needs	65% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan reflects appropriate dosage/intensity of intervention	80% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case notes reflects staff are using a strength-based approach	50% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case plan is updated every 90 days	75% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Supervision Strategies						
Frequency of offender contacts is in accordance to risk level	90%	1	2	3	4	5
Length of offender contacts is in accordance to risk level	90%	1	2	3	4	5
Type/frequency/duration of field visits conducted is in accordance with risk level	90%	1	2	3	4	5
Incentives and rewards are appropriately used	75%	1	2	3	4	5
Disincentives and sanctions are appropriately used	75%	1	2	3	4	5
Case notes indicate frequent use of behavioral techniques such as modeling, use of practice sessions, skill building, homework	75% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case notes indicate program learnings are reinforced in one-on-one sessions	50% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case notes indicate use of stages of change techniques to enhance motivation	65% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
Case notes reflect routine involvement of family in intervention strategies/case management plan as appropriate	35% M/H risk	1	2	3	4	5
NARRATIVE COMMENTS						
Summary of areas mastered:						
Summary of areas in need of improvement:						
Professional Development Plan:						

DIRECT OBSERVATION.

Direct observation is perhaps the most effective method of examining the quality of interactions between staff and clients. Direct observation can be conducted with the observer sitting in the same room as staff and clients who are interacting, in a separate room with a viewing window, by watching video taped sessions, or by listening to audio tapes. Although audio tapes may be the most practical way to conduct direct observation, they do not allow the coach to observe body language.

Exhibit 6, Core Correctional Practices Direct Observation Checklist, provides an example of a method to objectively measure the salient components of staff members’ interactions with clients. The items on the checklist are based on research-supported indicators of successful interventions.

Exhibit 6: Core Correctional Practices Direct Observation Checklist				
Performance Measure	Notes	3 = Exceeds Expectations 2 = Meets Expectations 1 = Needs Improvement N/A = Not Applicable		
Introduction/Session Preparation				
Greeted client		1	2	3 N/A
Prepared for and organized the session well		1	2	3 N/A
Controlled the learning conditions		1	2	3 N/A
Reviewed what was discussed in previous session		1	2	3 N/A
Relationship and Communication (Rapport and Eliciting Change)				
Used good verbal communication skills (listened well, did not interrupt, reflected back, listened more than spoke)		1	2	3 N/A
Non-verbal skills conveyed interest and respect (posture, physical gestures, facial expressions)		1	2	3 N/A
Used motivational enhancement techniques (open-ended questions, affirmation, reflection, roll with resistance, avoid power struggles/argumentation, summarizing, increase ambivalence, elicit change talk)		1	2	3 N/A
Exhibited empathetic, warm, genuine approach; non-judgmental		1	2	3 N/A
When necessary, reduced tension		1	2	3 N/A
Appropriately used authority (firm but fair, set boundaries, made rules clear when needed, did not lecture or threaten but gave choices)		1	2	3 N/A
Effective Case Management Techniques (Emphasis on Criminogenic Needs, Case Plan Goals, and Behavioral Techniques)				
Focused on the most important issues (major criminogenic needs, especially the driver) and in proper sequence		1	2	3 N/A
Established realistic session goals (addressed a limited number of key issues, worked to drive learning deep but was compatible with learning capacity)		1	2	3 N/A

Increased skill building by demonstrating and teaching skills, role modeling, conducting practice session(s), giving feedback, and providing encouragement		1	2	3	N/A
Reinforced self-efficacy (demonstrated that offender has or can acquire tools to successfully change)		1	2	3	N/A
Appropriate Use of Rewards and Sanctions					
Rewarded prosocial attitudes/behaviors appropriately through affirmation and other means; 4:1 ratio		1	2	3	N/A
When appropriate, provided incentive(s)					
Expressed disapproval for anti-social attitudes/behaviors; corrected/redirected without shaming		1	2	3	N/A
When necessary, provided appropriate sanction(s)		1	2	3	N/A
Closing					
Achieved goal of meeting		1	2	3	N/A
Assigned homework appropriately		1	2	3	N/A
Closed session with review of action steps, case plan, and expectations		1	2	3	N/A
NARRATIVE COMMENTS					
Summary of areas mastered:					
Summary of areas in need of improvement:					
Professional Development Plan:					

Exhibit 7, Program Session Delivery Direct Observation Checklist, provides an example of a method to objectively measure the skills of a group facilitator and the conduct of a group session. To be clear, this tool is *not* designed to assess the effectiveness of program content; other program evaluation processes are available to determine if the content and other features of a program are appropriately designed and administered (e.g., whether the program targets the proper risk levels and criminogenic needs; contains sufficient dosage, length, and intensity; is sufficiently behavioral in its techniques; manualized; etc.).¹¹ Both types of assessments (program content and content delivery) are important; an effectively run group that is not using material designed to reduce risk to reoffend will not succeed any more than an effective risk reduction program administered poorly.

¹¹ See, for example, the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI) (Gendreau & Andrews, 2001).

Exhibit 7: Program Session Delivery Direct Observation Checklist				
Performance Measure	Notes	3 = Exceeds Expectations 2 = Meets Expectations 1 = Needs Improvement N/A = Not Applicable		
Preparation, Set Up, and Introduction				
Facilitator was well prepared and organized for session		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator greeted participants warmly		1	2	3 N/A
The environment was free from distractions (i.e., physical space was appropriate for learning)		1	2	3 N/A
The group was of appropriate size (i.e., 5-12)		1	2	3 N/A
The group was appropriately composed (e.g., same gender, same or similar risk levels)		1	2	3 N/A
Appropriate expectations were set with participants at the beginning of the session		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator reviewed previous lesson		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator exhibited good rapport with group members		1	2	3 N/A
Control and Accountability				
Facilitator maintained group control; enforced group rules; boundaries were followed or consequences imposed immediately when not followed		1	2	3 N/A
Tardiness, attendance, and failure to do homework were appropriately addressed		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator Group Skills				
Facilitator used a manualized curriculum and followed the lesson plan while not being heavily dependent on it		1	2	3 N/A
Each participant was sufficiently involved throughout the session		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator displayed a non-judgmental approach		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator used repetition when presenting material		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator rewarded prosocial attitudes/behaviors appropriately through affirmation and other means, using a 4:1 ratio		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator demonstrated a strength-based approach		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator expressed disapproval for anti-social attitudes/behaviors; corrected/redirected without shaming		1	2	3 N/A
Facilitator was flexible without significantly deviating from session goals		1	2	3 N/A
Session was adequately paced (slow enough for learning and questions but not so slow as to evoke boredom)		1	2	3 N/A
Handouts and exercises were useful, adding to the participant's understanding of the material/skills		1	2	3 N/A
Session Activities				
Homework was reviewed; issues that arose as a result of the homework assignment were discussed		1	2	3 N/A
Role plays and practice opportunities were conducted		1	2	3 N/A
Instructions for role plays and practice were clear		1	2	3 N/A

New skills were introduced and demonstrated in the “tell, show, do” format		1	2	3	N/A
Skills were broken down into small parts		1	2	3	N/A
Mastery was achieved through repetition before skill practice increased in difficulty		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator debriefed following skill practice session		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator provided sufficient positive affirmation		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator provided specific, constructive feedback on what the participant could do to improve the skill		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator demonstrated confidence and competency in the material		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator varied instructional techniques to address all learning styles		1	2	3	N/A
Participants appeared engaged and interested		1	2	3	N/A
Participants were appropriately trusting and open in disclosing their thoughts and emotions, and in their skill practice		1	2	3	N/A
Facilitator concluded session with a review of the lesson and homework assignment		1	2	3	N/A
NARRATIVE COMMENTS					
Summary of areas mastered:					
Summary of areas in need of improvement:					
Professional Development Plan:					

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK.

Evaluations that seek to gather feedback from clients are an integral part of CQI. Research in the counseling profession has demonstrated that client feedback can effectively determine whether a specific intervention is succeeding. While the following research summaries reflect studies conducted with non-correctional clients and staff, they provide potentially important guidance to those working with correctional clients.¹² These studies show the following:

- a. The working relationship between staff and clients is correlated with intervention success. As the alliance between staff and clients increases, the likelihood of success improves. In fact, an individual client’s perception of that alliance is ultimately the best predictor of an interventions’ success. Clients’ ratings of alliance have a higher correlation to outcome than staff members’ ratings.¹³

¹² These non-correctional studies provide a guide for corrections professionals in terms of understanding the importance of clients’ perceptions, discussing those impressions with clients, conducting assessments early in the therapeutic relationship, and creating assessment methods that are easily administered by staff. Their replication in a correctional setting is critical to obtaining absolute confidence in the transferability of these lessons to other settings.

¹³ Bedi, Davis, & Arvay, 2005; Horvath & Bedi, 2002.

- b. Staff members are often unaware when clients are not progressing or are deteriorating in treatment.¹⁴ In one study, the researcher compared staff members' predictions of client deterioration to actuarial prediction methods and found that staff rarely predicted deterioration accurately (in comparison to highly accurate predictions of deterioration when actuarial assessment methods were used).¹⁵
- c. Early change is correlated with intervention success; therefore, the timing of the staff-client relationship assessment is relevant and suggests that feedback from clients should be obtained early in the intervention process.¹⁶
- d. Staff who used objective measures and who shared the results of assessments with clients were more likely to reach clinically significant levels of change than those not using these methods.¹⁷
- e. Relative to the tools used to assess staff-client alliance, a research study found that the majority of staff members do not consider as practical to use any measure or combination of measures that take more than five minutes per session to complete, score, and interpret.¹⁸

TOOLS TO GAUGE CLIENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS.

There are three primary types of tools that are used to collect participant feedback.¹⁹ They include written surveys, facilitated focus group sessions, and program assessments. Two participant feedback tools are included in this Coaching Packet, a Post Session Assessment and a Community Supervision Exit Survey.

Two forms of CQI assessments (pre/post assessment and post assessment) measure client perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions (i.e., the impact of the intervention content on skills or reduction of negative or debilitating symptoms).

- ✓ A *pre/post assessment* is administered just prior to and immediately following an intervention session, periodically after a session, or after an entire intervention has been completed. Its purpose is to identify the presence (or lack) of a programming effect.
- ✓ A *post assessment* measures clients' perceptions following the completion of an intervention. That is, unlike the pre/post assessment, no pre-test is administered.

Exhibit 8, Post Session Assessment, is an example of an assessment provided to clients to determine their perceptions of a group after a single session.

¹⁴ Lambert et al., 2003.

¹⁵ Hannan et al., 2005.

¹⁶ Miller & Duncan, 2000.

¹⁷ Anker, Duncan, & Sparks, 2009; Brown, Dreis, & Nace, 1999; Miller, Duncan, Sorrell, & Brown, 2004.

¹⁸ Brown, Dreis, & Nace, 1999; Miller, Duncan, Sorrell, & Brown, 2004.

¹⁹ These same methods can be used to collect feedback from stakeholder groups.

Exhibit 8: Post Session Assessment					
	5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree				
Today I learned a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
When I talked, I felt listened to.	1	2	3	4	5
What we talked about today was really important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
The staff were good role models for me.	1	2	3	4	5
I liked what we did today.	1	2	3	4	5
The staff cared about whether I succeeded in learning the skills we worked on today.	1	2	3	4	5
I tried hard to learn the material today.	1	2	3	4	5
I did not feel nervous in the group.	1	2	3	4	5
I thought the homework assignment was useful.	1	2	3	4	5
I was satisfied with the way the staff ran the group.	1	2	3	4	5
The activities today held my attention.	1	2	3	4	5
I received the right kind of practice and information to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5
The length of the session was about right.	1	2	3	4	5
Overall, I was pleased with how the session went today.	1	2	3	4	5
On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the best rating, how would you rate today's session?					
The session would have been better if:					
What I would not want to change about the session is:					
Other comments:					

EXIT SURVEY.

The purpose of an exit survey is to gather information about clients' perceptions of an intervention. These surveys can be conducted in a number of ways including by telephone, through one-on-one in-person interviews, or in writing. They may be administered by the agency providing the service, by the individual providing the service, or by an independent third party.

Exhibit 9, Community Supervision Exit Survey, is an example of such a survey. In addition to considering the content of such a survey, the pros and cons of the timing and method of administration must be considered. For example, if the exit survey is administered to offenders upon completion of supervision, only responses from those who successfully terminate will be

included. For this reason, such a survey might be administered at an earlier interval, when the perceptions of a cross-section of all supervisees is more likely obtained. On the other hand, it is possible that more candid responses will be gathered post-supervision, when individuals feel freer to be candid. Other administration questions must be considered as well. For example, while anonymous written surveys may be easiest to administer, they may pose difficulties for those with literacy challenges.

These are among the many questions agency staff will need to consider in the development of their CQI plans.

**Exhibit 9:
Community Supervision Exit Survey**

	5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neutral	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
1. I was treated with respect by my supervising officer.	5	4	3	2	1
2. The rules of my supervision were clearly explained to me.	5	4	3	2	1
3. If I had a complaint about my supervision officer I knew with whom I needed to talk.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I understood what I needed to do in order to successfully complete my supervision.	5	4	3	2	1
5. The length of my supervision was about right.	5	4	3	2	1
6. My supervising officer listened to me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. My supervising officer cared about whether I succeeded.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I was given the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge I needed to succeed.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I had input into my case plan.	5	4	3	2	1
10. My family/significant other was as involved in my case plan as I wanted them to be.	5	4	3	2	1
11. Overall I was pleased with how my supervision went.	5	4	3	2	1

Section II: Continuous Quality Improvement Coaching Packet Checklist

Case Management	YES	NO	NOT CLEAR	NOTES
1. Is a CQI plan in place that includes:				
a. A clear identification of a BHAG (i.e., core mission)?				
b. Identification of the specific activities that will best support the mission?				
c. Measures that will determine whether intended outcomes are reached through these specific activities?				
d. The processes (e.g., participant feedback, observation, auditing, and training assessments) and tools (e.g., surveys, taping, checklists, audits) that will result in qualitative feedback?				
2. Has an organizational structure been established to support the CQI effort (e.g., policies, forms, training, assignment of personnel dedicated to CQI, committees, and feedback process)?				
3. Have staff members been sufficiently involved in the establishment of CQI processes so as to ensure their understanding and buy-in into its purposes and methods?				
4. Has an organizational culture of quality in which staff feel a sense of professional responsibility for learning and growing been established?				
5. Is a CQI process in place to ensure inter-rater reliability of risk/needs assessment instruments?				
6. Is a CQI process in place to ensure effective case planning (e.g., matching goals to criminogenic needs and taking into account responsivity, strengths, triggers, and relapse)?				
7. Is a CQI process in place to ensure the efficacy of cognitive behavioral treatment and other programming?				
8. Is a CQI process in place to ensure that supervision agents are skilled in core correctional practices (i.e., role modeling, reinforcing prosocial behavioral, teaching concrete skills, skill practice, discouraging antisocial behavior, use of rewards/sanctions, and engagement in Motivational Interviewing/professional alliance)?				
9. Is a process in place to ensure that CQI coaches are also provided CQI coaching?				
10. Have potential obstacles to the success of the CQI process been identified and addressed (e.g., insufficient staff time, staff discomfort, data privacy, union concerns, technology, and logistics)?				
11. Is the CQI process both sufficiently limited to guard against overwhelming staff and CQI coaches and at the same time extensive enough to ensure that key activities are assessed and advanced?				
12. Is a plan in place to ensure that CQI progress is acknowledged and celebrated?				

Section III: Action Planning Worksheet

GOAL:			
Objective 1:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Objective 2:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Objective 3:			
Tasks	Lead Person	Completion Date	Assistance/Expertise Needed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Section IV: References and Additional Resources

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