



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Continuous Quality Improvement

Subject:	Continuous Quality Improvement
Authority:	N/A
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards Practice Model (GPS)
Application:	All DSS Staff
Purpose:	
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) prioritizes opportunities for improvement, increases the understanding and use of CQI methodologies, and helps to analyze processes using data which assists with informed decision-making. CQI is dependent upon the inclusion and meaningful participation of staff, children, youth, families, and stakeholders throughout the process. This section outlines policies and procedures that promote use of CQI within the agency as the means of helping internal divisions or program areas plan, design, implement, and assess customized strategies to improve services and performance.	
Policy Statement:	
The agency CQI process is housed in the of the Division of QA and CQI. There is a Division Director, a CQI manager, and a QA manager who provide the needed oversight and authority to implement CQI projects. These managers are supported by a team of trained CQI coordinators to ensure standards and requirements are sustained through ongoing CQI processes described below. DSS Division Directors may make a written request to the Division of QA and CQI for support and consultation in using CQI methodologies to identify, describe, and analyze emerging problems, and in testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions to identified problems. CQI specialty trainings and CQI project teams are the forums used for in-depth and comprehensive quality improvement initiatives.	
Policy Administration:	
The policy owner is the Director of QA and CQI. The Director of QA and CQI and the Agency CQI Manager will review the policy on an annual basis and request updates as needed.	
Procedures:	
A. Requesting a CQI Project	To start a CQI Project, a DSS Division Director submits DSS Form 701: CQI Project Request to CQI by sending the completed form to cqi@dss.sc.gov . The requested project can be division wide or focus on a single program area.
B. Problem Identification	1. After receiving a DSS Form 701: CQI Project Request , CQI staff conducts preliminary data collection to include and engage with the requestor to identify an initial scope of work. This preliminary data collection stage is called Problem Identification. Depending on the circumstances, different Problem Identification activities may take place to gain understanding of the situation.

Subject: Continuous Quality Improvement

	2. Based on the results of the Problem Identification activities, a joint determination between the division or program area and CQI staff will be made, with the program area having final say, as to which of the following is better suited to address the issue identified: a. A CQI consultation (refer to section C); or b. A CQI project team (refer to section D through H) is the appropriate course of action.
C.Consultation Only	1. Based on the Problem Identification results and the determination that the potential scope of work in question does not rise to a level of engagement associated with a comprehensive CQI project team approach, CQI staff may provide a limited array of services over a limited period. 2. Potential activities could range from interviews with leadership, managerial, and frontline staff to the use of small group assessment tools. These activities will be developed in conjunction with division leadership and would be supplemented by an initial review of available data from compliance and monitoring processes and/or other key performance indicators. This information will be documented on DSS Form 700: CQI Project Engagement Agreement and discussed with division leadership and appropriate staff to ensure applicable and measurable results are infused into daily practice.
D.CQI Project Team Creation	1. The duration of this step is no more than 30 calendar days. 2. The purpose of the CQI Project Team is to conduct all parts of CQI for the process issue being addressed. 3. Based on the Problem Identification results and the nature of work in question, CQI will organize a comprehensive CQI project team composed of one or more subject matter experts, managers, team leaders, a team champion, and employees who do the work on a routine basis. • Additionally, other individuals who provide support services (legal, finance, technology, data analysis, etc.) may be permanent or on-call CQI project team members. In some instances, customers, stakeholders, vendors, and allied partners from other organizations may also serve as permanent or on-call members. 4. All staff serving on the CQI Team must have completed Phase 1 CQI training. Participation in Phase 2 CQI training is encouraged (for more information refer to section I). CQI Team Leads must also complete Phase 3 CQI training. 5. Initial team formation (organizational and orientation activities) will be facilitated by CQI including but not limited to, the identification of a facilitator (if one is not provided by QA and CQI), establishment of ground rules, creation of meeting schedules and preliminary timelines, etc. This information will be documented on the DSS Form 700: CQI Project Engagement Agreement.

Subject: Continuous Quality Improvement

E. Data Analysis	1. The duration of this step is no more than 30 calendar days. 2. The initial data analysis process begins with research, data review, and investigation to better understand the nature of the identified problem. Some of this work may have been done during the problem identification stage of the CQI process; however, a more in-depth, methodical, and data-informed approach is used at this point. 3. The identified problem can begin being investigated by using one or more assessment tools or processes. The CQI team will identify all data sources that will be used in the project. This can include division data sources, federal data sources, or other data sources. 4. At this time, any data quality issues will be addressed and resolved. This can include monitoring existing federal requirements depending on the program area and type of data being used.
F. Problem Assessment	1. The duration of this step is no more than 30 calendar days. 2. Using facilitated analysis protocols, the CQI project team can differentiate layers of issues and circumstances into problems and their associated symptoms while avoiding proposed solutions until the Small-Scale Solutions Implementation and Assessment step. 3. Brainstorming and facilitated discussions are then used to observe, define, refine, and validate the suspected problem while separating out symptoms and possible solutions. 4. The goal of these activities is to produce a clear and concise problem statement that will serve as the foundation of the CQI work. At the conclusion of assessing the problem, any needed updates will be made to the DSS Form 701: CQI Project Request. 5. These activities are supplemented by additional data collection, reporting, and analysis as well as interviews, surveys, and process mapping.
G.Small Scale Solution Implementation and Assessment	1. The duration of this step is 90 to 180 calendar days. 2. Using the problem statement created during Problem Identification, the focus turns to the development, small-scale implementation (beta work, pilot initiatives, etc.), and assessment of proposed changes at one or more sublevels within the agency. 3. Work can progress through multiple cycles as activities are repeated for validation and/or progressively scaled up within the agency. All data and identified measures will be tracked and kept on SharePoint. The QA and CQI data analyst can be used to analyze the data when needed. Note: These efforts may require additional training, orientation, or support for staff who are not part of the CQI project team. Ongoing data collection, reporting, and analysis will help determine the impact of changes on performance.
H. Decisions on	1. Duration of this step is no more than 90 to 180 calendar days.

Subject: Continuous Quality Improvement

Large-Scale Implementation, Next Steps, and Feedback to Stakeholders	2. Based on the data analysis and consensus of the CQI project team, division leadership or designee will make a decision regarding whether the recommended change(s) tested and assessed during Small-Scale Solutions Implementation and Assessment affected the desired result(s) and should be scaled up to a system-wide implementation. 3. If yes, a recommendation is made to the program area leadership team that the work done during Small-Scale Solutions Implementation and Assessment be replicated on a larger scale, including ongoing assessment. Program area leadership should provide guidance about whether the project should be scaled up, discontinued, or if an earlier stage of activity should be revisited with recommended changes. 4. All results from the CQI Project will be shared with program area leadership to ensure the program area is able to decide what the applicable results are and how to implement them into daily practice. Results will also be used to inform training, policy, and system development as applicable. 5. Should the results indicate the need for an additional analysis or study and the program area approves, the CQI process will begin again. 6. CQI Management will work to ensure stakeholder involvement in the CQI process by sharing results, as applicable, in existing meetings and reports.
I. CQI Specialty Training	Dedicated DSS staff provide three sequential phases of training and assigns one or more of the three phases of training, based on the results of the group's assessment during Due Diligence. • Phase 1: training for all new DSS employees to learn basic CQI concepts • Phase 2: a more technical training for staff, CQI team leaders, and participants of a CQI project team • Phase 3: training for CQI team leaders or facilitators

Forms:	DSS Form 700: CQI Project Engagement Agreement DSS Form 701: CQI Project Request
Related Management Reports:	N/A

Glossary:

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI): is the ongoing process of identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and opportunities for improvement within systems, processes, and programs.