CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

QUALITY SERVICE REVIEW (QSR) PROCESS MANUAL

Revised December 2015

Version 4.0

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services
Office of Children, Youth and Families

TABLE OF CONTENTS

State Site Lead Note: Appendices listed in **bold font** indicate documents required for use during the QSR process that **must be submitted** to CQI Project Managers. The CQI Project Managers are available to answer any questions regarding the required submissions.

The current versions of the QSR Manual and all Appendices may be accessed electronically at the CQI webpage (www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm).

Acknowledgements

The QSR Process Manual was developed by members of the Sustaining Change workgroup, and key stakeholders who have supported and actively participated in the roll out of CQI effort across the Commonwealth. The QSR Process Manual is meant to serve as a guide and provide considerations for each phase of the CQI process. Since the CQI process focuses on continuous improvement, the manual will also continue to evolve as lessons are learned from each phase of CQI, and will therefore continue to be edited to reflect those lessons.

I. Mission Statement

Pennsylvania's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) effort is a vehicle that will help drive and sustain positive change of our child/youth and family outcomes. The Quality Service Review (QSR) process is one component of the CQI effort and it will provide the opportunity for an in depth review of the status of a child/youth and family's safety, permanency and well being outcomes as well as practice performance. The QSR process will allow agencies to gather data and evaluate their progress to better enhance case practice to the benefit of children, youth and families in the Commonwealth.

II. Purpose

- The purposes of Pennsylvania's Quality Service Review process are:

  - To appraise the current status of the focus child/youth in key life areas as well as the status and functioning of the parent/caregiver(s) and the performance of key practice areas provided to the focus child/youth and family.
  - To assure that the actions of a team of child welfare professionals are guided by clear and comprehensive policies and are rooted in Pennsylvania's Practice Model/Standards.
  - To improve the quality and usefulness of information needed to evaluate the safety, permanence and well being of children and youth.
  - To assure the quality and effectiveness of services for children, youth and families by regularly reviewing programs and practices.
  - To support the efforts of child welfare agencies to maintain an environment that encourages learning and program improvement.
  - To stimulate actions and next steps to build on strengths and support efforts to improve outcomes.

III. Process for the Selection of Counties for the CQI Effort

Purpose: Full implementation of the CQI effort across the Commonwealth represents a multi-year effort that will be conducted in a phased-in approach. Counties that are approved to be phased-in to the CQI effort agree to participate in state-supported Quality Service Review process on an ongoing basis.

- The following outlines the process for a County to officially join the CQI effort:

  - The OCYF CQI Project Manager will distribute communication to all 67 counties regarding recruitment of counties for their involvement in the next Phase of CQI implementation.

  - In order to be considered for participation in the CQI effort, counties must submit a letter of interest via electronic mail to their identified OCYF Regional Director and the OCYF CQI Project Manager.

  - Following the submission of the letter of interest, the County will receive notification from the OCYF CQI Project Manager thanking them for their interest and outlining the next steps.

  - Interested counties must then submit a self-assessment of the things they considered when deciding to participate in PA's CQI effort **(*Appendix 1: Self-Assessment for Participation in Pennsylvania's Continuous Quality Improvement Effort*)** within approximately two weeks from the submission of their letter of interest. The self-assessment should be sent via electronic mail to their identified OCYF Regional Director and the OCYF CQI Project Manager.
    - It is not mandatory for a County to have in place all of the items outlined in the self-assessment template; they are simply things to consider when making a decision regarding readiness for participation in the CQI effort.
    - The purpose of the assessment is for the County to identify resources already in place within the County as well as those resources that will be needed by the County to support their successful participation in the CQI effort. In addition, it will allow the State to gather county-specific information to assist in the selection of the counties for each phase of the CQI effort based upon the supports needed and the capacity of all involved.

  - A meeting will then be scheduled by the Bureau Director of OCYF Regional Offices, the Department Lead for CWRC's Organizational Effectiveness/Regional Team Department and CQI Project Managers to confirm the counties for the next phase of the CQI effort and to establish State Site Lead teams. OCYF Regional Office staff and CWRC Practice Improvement Specialists will be invited to attend the meeting. The meeting will provide an opportunity to share additional information, materials and details regarding all relevant aspects of the County's continuous quality improvement efforts and establish a plan so that the State Site Lead team can prepare a County about what to expect as a participant of the CQI effort.

- Following the meeting, the Bureau Director (or designee) will advise the County Administrator of the County's confirmed participation (or deferment) in the CQI effort. The communication will include the introduction of the State Site Lead team. The Bureau Director (or designee) will "cc" the State Site Lead team and the CQI Project Managers on this communication.

IV. Notification to the County

Purpose: Communication between County staff and the State Site Lead team regarding the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) effort and the Quality Service Review (QSR) process is critical since there is a great deal of work that is required to ensure that the County has the support it needs to be successful. Furthermore, it is important that County staff understand the purpose of the QSR and how it relates to CQI efforts while also understanding all that is involved pre, during and post the onsite QSR.

- Following the County's notification by the Bureau Director of OCYF's Regional Office (or designee), the State Site Lead team will establish communication with the identified members of the Local Site Lead team that are determined by the County Administrator.

- Communication **(*Appendix 2a: Communication Regarding Notification Meeting*)** should be sent by the State Site Lead team to the County Administrator (and/or the designated Local Site Lead team, if known) via electronic mail which will include the following: confirmation of the County's involvement in the CQI effort; identification of the State Site Lead team's names and contact information; request to establish a date and time for a Notification Meeting; and suggested participants for the Notification Meeting

- The objectives of the Notification Meeting:
  - To distribute a copy of and review the QSR Process Manual and the QSR Protocol;
  - To provide a brief history of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI);
  - To explain the purpose and general steps of the QSR process;
  - To identify the Local Site Lead(s) and discuss their roles and responsibilities;
  - To share a timeline of events from the Notification Meeting through the development and acceptance of the County Improvement Plan;
  - To discuss the dates, times and location for the QSR training;
  - To discuss the dates, times and location for the onsite QSR;
  - To establish the "Effective Sampling Date" and provide an explanation of the criteria for the pool of cases from which the final QSR case samples will be chosen;
  - To provide an overview of the purpose of the Orientation Meetings; and
  - To discuss the date of the first Orientation Meeting and discuss who should be invited to attend.

- The Notification Meeting agendas ***(Appendix 2b: Notification Meeting Facilitator's Agenda*** and ***Appendix 2c: Notification Meeting Agenda)*** will be used as the guide for the Notification Meeting which is facilitated by the

State Site Lead team. ***Appendix 6: Pennsylvania QSR Overview*** and ***Appendix 7: Quality Services Review Timeline*** can also be good resources.

- Shortly after the Notification Meeting is held, an email or letter will be sent by the State Site Lead(s) to the County Administrator and/or the Local Site Lead team regarding potential date(s) and information pertaining to the scheduling and planning of the Orientation Meeting(s) as well as ongoing meetings between the State and Local Site Lead team.

State Site Lead Note: The Notification Meeting is facilitated by the State Site Lead(s). This initial meeting sets the framework for the CQI effort and the QSR process. State Site Lead(s) are responsible for working closely with the Local Site Lead(s) to coordinate and plan the activities described within the QSR Manual which includes activities that happen before, during and after the onsite QSR.

V. Building Your State and Local Site Lead Team

Purpose: It is important to have a well-established and well-functioning team that works together pre, during and post the onsite QSR. Developing and demonstrating a team approach will result in a unified effort, common purpose and clear roles and responsibilities that support positive change.

- The Local and State Leads should assess the needs of their team and contact CQI Project Managers with questions and requests for training and/or technical assistance related to the CQI effort and the QSR process, including the QSR Protocol and Manual, throughout the pre/during/post QSR process.
  - **Mandatory**: Site Lead teams of counties new to the CQI effort must schedule the Site Lead TA/Training Overview. This is ideally 6 months prior to the onsite QSR, but at least prior to the Effective Sampling Date. The Site Lead TA/Training Overview will be delivered by the CQI Project Managers or their designees. HZA may be invited to attend these sessions.
  - **Optional**: Site Lead teams of repeat counties (those who have already completed an onsite QSR) are also welcomed to participate in the Site Lead TA/Training Overview, but it is not mandatory. The full overview, or specific portions of the overview, will be delivered by the CQI Project Managers or their designees. HZA may be invited to attend these sessions.

- Team members should read and become familiar with the QSR Manual and continue to reference the QSR Manual throughout the entire QSR process.

- Team members should meet and communicate regularly pre, during and post the onsite QSR.

- Team members should work together to define how they want to work together as a team, assess strengths and needs and establish a plan to work together. Teams will benefit from applying their individual strengths to their roles and responsibilities while also learning from team members as part of the process.

- Team members are accountable for their actions, keeping commitments and following through with agreed upon responsibilities.

- Pertinent information about the pre/during/post onsite QSR activities should be captured on ***Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template***. It is suggested that one identified person on the Site Lead team be responsible for updating and monitoring all components of the QSR Team Chart. The chart should be shared regularly with all Site Lead team members and the identified CQI Project Manager that is supporting the Site Lead team.

- Local and State Site Leads should establish their own regular schedule of meetings to prepare for the suggested orientation meetings as well as to plan for all pre/during/post QSR activities. The frequency of these Site Lead meetings should be based upon need. CQI Project Managers are available as resources to the Local and State Site Lead team.

VI. Orientation to the CQI Effort and QSR Process

Purpose: There is an opportunity to have a variety of Orientation Meetings with County staff and various stakeholders to introduce them to the purpose and process of the CQI effort and the Quality Service Review (QSR) and to prepare them for their involvement throughout.

- The first Orientation Meeting should include an overview of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) and QSR processes. State Site Leads should facilitate this meeting using ***Appendix 4a: First Orientation Meeting Facilitator's Agenda*** and providing ***Appendix 4b: First Orientation Meeting Agenda***. Expected time: 1 ½ hours.

  - The first Orientation Meeting should occur anywhere between 3 to 6 months prior to the onsite QSR. This meeting should include, but not be limited to: State Site Leads; County Administrator; the County's management team; Local Site Lead(s), if identified; and the County Agency's Quality Improvement Staff. It can also be helpful to have Caseworkers, Supervisors and managers present, depending on the size of the Agency.
  - It is left to the Agency Administrator's discretion whether other interested parties will be invited to attend the meeting. Suggestions of possible participants could include: Contract/Private Provider Representatives; School District Representatives; Representatives from the Behavioral Health System; Judges; District Attorneys; Agency Counsel; Guardian ad Litems; Agency Board Members; County Human Services Administrator, County Commissioners/Executives.
  - ***Appendix 5a: CQI and QSR Overview Power Point*** has been provided as a resource for a possible PowerPoint presentation at this meeting.
  - ***Appendix 5b: Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model*** *and* ***Appendix 5c: Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model Visual*** are also provided *as resources.* To help families achieve positive outcomes, child welfare systems throughout the country, including Pennsylvania, have strengthened their approaches to practice. Practice models guide the work of those involved with the child welfare system to work together to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. Practice models serve as the "explicit link connecting...policy, practice, training, supervision and quality assurance with its mission, values, and strategic plan" (NRCOI, 2008). Pennsylvania's Child Welfare Practice Model outlines that children, youth, families, child welfare representatives and other child and family service partners need to work together as team members with the shared community responsibility to achieve positive outcomes. These outcomes can be achieved by consistently modeling the values and principles at every level and across all partnerships and by demonstrating the specific and essential skills to be utilized across all aspects of the child welfare

system. For more information about PA's Practice Model, go to http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/PracticeModel.htm.

- The second Orientation Meeting should involve the State Site Leads, the Local Site Lead(s), and any other Agency staff members identified as case selection and logistics contacts. Managers/Administrators may also attend. The meeting should occur after the first orientation meeting, but 3 months prior to the onsite QSR. The case sample selection process and preparation and logistics of the onsite QSR will be discussed. State and Local Site Leads should facilitate this meeting using ***Appendix 4c: Second Orientation Meeting Facilitator's Agenda*** and providing ***Appendix 4d: Second Orientation Meeting Agenda***. Expected time: 2 hours

    - Please refer to the following QSR Manual sections and the applicable appendices contained within: **Section VIII: QSR Sampling and Case Exclusions**; **Section IX: QSRs and Licensing**; **Section X: Scheduling of Case-Specific Interviews**; **Section XI: Focus Groups and Key Stakeholder Interviews** and **Section XII: Logistics**.

- The third Orientation Meeting should occur following final sample selection (ideally 6 weeks prior to the onsite QSR) and will involve all child welfare staff, including the Caseworkers and Supervisors, whose cases were identified as part of the case sample. Managers/Administrators may also attend along with any key staff/directors of provider agencies that have cases that will be reviewed. At this meeting the Local Site Lead(s) will provide the staff with details regarding the preparations for the onsite QSR and what they can expect during the onsite QSR. State Site Leads should be available and attend this meeting, if requested by the Local Site Leads. ***Appendix 4e: Third Orientation Meeting Facilitator's Agenda*** and ***Appendix 4f: Third Orientation Meeting Agenda*** should be utilized as a framework for this meeting. Expected time: 1 hour.

    - The Local Site Lead(s) will prepare packets of information for Agency staff to be used at the third Orientation Meeting. The packets can include resources such as: ***Appendix 14a: Guidelines for Talking to Families about the QSR*** <u>or</u> ***14b: Guidelines for Talking to Families about the QSR***; **Appendices *12a: Parent/Caregiver's Authorization to Obtain and Release Information*** (if necessary); ***Appendix 12b: Youth's Authorization to Obtain and Release Information*** (if necessary); ***Appendix 12c: Consent to Obtain/Release Confidential Drug and Alcohol Information*** (if necessary); ***Appendix 13b: QSR Blank Interview Schedule***; ***Appendix 10: Case Summary*** and ***Appendix 11: Case Contact Sheet*** and ***Appendix 17: Case Record Preparation***; ***Appendix 18: Review Week Schedule***. ***Appendix 20: QSR Roll-Up Sheet. Appendix 21: QSR Roll-Up Sheet Guidance.***

State Site Lead Note: These are just examples of three orientation meetings that can be held. Information should be shared with staff based on the needs of the County and the Site Lead Team members. The content, format, and participants for each Orientation Meeting should be determined in collaboration with the Local and State Site Leads and the County Administrator to assure that it best meets the needs of the County and the meeting participants.

Local and State Site Leads should establish their own regular schedule of meetings to prepare for the above suggested orientation meetings as well as to monitor all pre, during and post onsite QSR activities. The frequency of these Site Lead meetings should be based on need. CQI Project Managers are available as resources to the Local and State Site Lead team.

VII. Building Your QSR Team

Purpose: The recruitment of QSR reviewers is an integral part in the success of an onsite QSR. QSR reviewers will be gathering case-specific information via interviews and will rate cases based on the QSR Protocol. QSR reviewers will then make case-specific and systemic recommendations. It is critical that the QSR review team includes a broad range of stakeholders with a mix of experience and expertise to enhance the process.

<u>Recruitment and Selection of QSR Reviewers</u>:

- State and Local Site Leads are responsible for recruiting reviewers for their prospective teams. This recruitment should start as soon as possible or at least when the dates for the 2 day training, Refresher Session, and onsite QSR have been determined.

- QSR Reviewers must be trained and certified.

    - <u>2 day training</u>: QSR Reviewers must attend, participate and receive confirmation of being a QSR Reviewer by attending to a 2 day training before they are considered to be a certified QSR reviewer.
        - The training is *521: The Quality Service Review Process*. This training is held at a location determined by the State and Local Site Leads and coordinated in conjunction with CWRC's Resource Specialist.
        - Any participant who misses more than 15 minutes of the training will not be considered to be a certified QSR reviewer, and can therefore not be a reviewer until they complete the full 2 day training.
        - Confirmation of the certification of each training participant is determined collaboratively by the QSR Trainer and the QSR Site Lead team.
    - <u>Refresher Training</u>: QSR Reviewers will be asked to attend a Refresher Session, *521: QSR Refresher Session*, to remain certified as a QSR Reviewer.
        - All QSR Reviewers that <u>do not</u> attend the 2 day training during a Round <u>do</u> have to attend the QSR Refresher – to stay fresh. If a QSR reviewer was certified in the previous round and they are scheduled to conduct a QSR case review within 6 months of that certification, they may request an exemption from the QSR Refresher training. All requests for exemption should be communicated to the CQI Project Managers via the State Site Leads. CQI Project Managers will review these requests and notify the State and Local Site Leads of their final determination.
        - If a QSR Reviewer is reviewing at more than one location during a Round, the QSR reviewer only has to attend one Refresher Session during a Round.

    - The Refresher Session is most often conducted via WebEx and will be scheduled by the Site Lead team in collaboration with the identified CWRC Resource Specialist.

- The expectations that are outlined during the recruitment of QSR Reviewers is that QSR Reviewers commit to participating in the QSR training (either the full 2 day QSR training or the Refresher Session) AND all components of the 3 day onsite QSR. That means that QSR Reviewers are not to have ANY other commitments during those days and should completely clear their calendars.

- When recruiting QSR reviewers it is recommended that reviewers have an understanding that the onsite QSR oftentimes requires them to work outside of "regular" office hours (most often to conduct interviews with the family) and they may be asked to work into the evening. Reviewers should also be made aware that they may also be asked to do additional work via e-mail with their review partner as a part of the second-level quality assurance process that occurs following the onsite QSR.

- It should be noted that the Child Welfare Resource Center's (CWRC's) Statewide Resource Specialist (or CQI Project Manager/designee) maintains a database of both certified and potential QSR reviewers. CWRC staff has access to this database and can provide information to State and Local Site Lead teams regarding potential QSR reviewers as well as information about certified QSR reviewers. This information is also available via the CQI SharePoint site.

- A pair of reviewers will need to be identified for each case that is to be reviewed. The pair of reviewers will include a "local" reviewer and a "state" reviewer. The "local" reviewers will be identified by the Local Site Lead(s) and the "state" reviewers will be identified by the State Site Lead(s). Local and State Site Leads are encouraged to work together on team development. It should be noted that "local" and "state" back-up reviewers should also be secured for the onsite QSR days.
    - "Local" reviewers may include but are not limited to: Staff (i.e. Caseworkers, Supervisors, administrators) from the County Agency; Private Providers; Agency Solicitors; Juvenile Probation staff; Parent and Child Advocates; County Commissioners; County Mental Health/Mental Retardation staff; Representatives from the County Drug and Alcohol Commission; and Local key stakeholders (such as school officials), etc.
    - "State" reviewers may include but are not limited to: Representatives from the Office of Children, Youth and Families; Staff from other counties or private agencies; Representatives from the Statewide Technical Assistance Collaborative (i.e. Child Welfare Training Program, Hornby Zeller Associates, Statewide Adoption and

Permanency Network, Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts, American Bar Association, etc.); and other statewide key stakeholders.

- Both the “local” and “state” review team members should include a minimum of one back-up reviewer. The back-up reviewers are expected to clear their schedule as if they were a ‘regular’ reviewer.
  - Back-up reviewer status remains “on-call” in the event that a ‘regular’ reviewer notifies their State or Local Site Lead team about an emergency which prohibits them from being a reviewer. (NOTE: These are typically last minute situations that are unavoidable).
  - Back-up reviewers should reside locally or within 1 hour from where the onsite QSR is being held, so they can be readily available, if needed.
  - The back-up reviewers must attend the 2 day training or QSR Refresher Session if not already certified as a QSR reviewer. As with all reviewers, back-up reviewers need to be re-certified if they haven’t attended a Refresher Session during the current Round.
  - If the onsite QSR is occurring over the course of 2 separate weeks, it is helpful to have a minimum of one back-up reviewer for each week for both the local and state team.
  - Site Lead team members should remember to contact back-up reviewers to advise them that they are not needed, if applicable. Site Leads must also update CQI Project Managers and the identified HZA Lead if back-up reviewers fill spots of other QSR reviewers.

- Pertinent information about the pre, during, post onsite QSR activities should be captured on ***Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template***. One identified person on the Site Lead team should be responsible for updating and monitoring all components of the QSR Team Chart, but the chart should be shared regularly with all Site Lead team members and the identified CQI Project Manager that is supporting the Site Lead team. CWRC Resource Specialists are available to assist Site Lead teams in the recruitment of the QSR reviewers and gathering the necessary information that is to be outlined on ***Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template***.

- A brochure entitled, “Becoming a Quality Service Review (QSR) Reviewer” is available to be used in recruitment of QSR reviewers. ***(Appendix 3b: QSR Reviewer Brochure).***

- “Local” and “state” reviewers volunteer to participate in the QSR process. Hotel, travel and meal reimbursements are authorized only by the agency/organization that is allowing their employee to participate as a reviewer in the QSR process.

- In some instances, Casey Family Programs has allocated funds for reimbursement of County Staff to be QSR reviewers. See ***Appendix 3c:***

Reimbursement for County Staff for their participation as a QSR Reviewer for more information about this process and speak with the CQI Project Manager.

- It is critical to the QSR process that both members of the QSR team fully participate in all aspects of the QSR process. If other commitments prevent this from happening, the person may need to withdraw from being a QSR Reviewer.

<u>Pairing the Reviewers</u>:

- Once the Local and State Site Leads have finalized the names of the reviewers, all Site Leads will collaborate with one another to establish well-functioning review team pairs.

- Members of the QSR review team should have:
    - ✓ An understanding of the CQI process and QSR process;
    - ✓ An understanding of the PA Practice Model;
    - ✓ The ability to gather, analyze, interpret and assess information relevant to the case review process from case files and interviews in the time allowed;
    - ✓ The ability to evaluate the effectiveness of child welfare practice using the QSR protocol;
    - ✓ The ability to explain the QSR process to case participants*;*
    - ✓ The ability to identify and apply a range of QSR interviewing techniques, balancing the need to gather accurate information with the needs and background of the interviewee;
    - ✓ The ability to use a strength-based, culturally-competent approach during interactions with County staff, interview participants, peer reviewers and the Site Leads;
    - ✓ The ability to provide an effective verbal summary of review findings;
    - ✓ The ability to provide an effective written rationale regarding the favorable and unfavorable conditions that exist so that the reasoning behind the scores for all indicators and sub-indicators are clear, concise as well as descriptive;
    - ✓ The ability to demonstrate awareness of reviewer role, boundaries, and responsibilities to the County as outlined in the manual;
    - ✓ A vehicle to travel to and from interviews;
    - ✓ A mobile phone where he/she can be reached; and
    - ✓ Access to and competence in using a computer/laptop with wireless or Wi-Fi capability.

- Site Leads should also consider the QSR reviewers previous experience with QSRs and match new reviewers with more experienced reviewers whenever possible. It is suggested that Site Lead teams consider pairing reviewers with background in the field of Child Welfare with reviewers who come from another background.

- Once the State and Local Site Leads have selected the QSR team pairs, they will also need to identify which case the QSR review team will be assigned to review.

- It is important to be aware of any potential conflicts of interests (of QSR reviewers and Site Leads) due to past or present employment or consulting arrangements.

- QSR reviewers should be encouraged to meet and/or communicate with their review partner in advance of onsite QSR if they do not have the opportunity to meet at the QSR reviewer certification training(s). Some Site Lead teams may choose to offer a 'meet and greet' the evening before the onsite QSR so that those involved in the QSR process can meet.

- Site Leads should identify a "lead" Site Lead for each of the cases that are to be reviewed. This will help with the second-level quality assurance work that is done by the Site Leads following the onsite QSR, and also allows for Site Leads to focus their onsite technical assistance to their assigned teams as much as possible.

State Site Lead Note: ***Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template*** should be created and utilized throughout the QSR Process (pre, during and post QSR) in conjunction with the Local Site Leads as it captures necessary reviewer information and a plethora of logistical details. The QSR Team Chart is to be submitted to CQI Project Managers periodically throughout the QSR process, as well as when the chart is finalized.

VIII. QSR Sampling and Case Exclusions

Purpose

One of the priority tasks in preparing for the QSR is to identify which cases are going to be reviewed. This section describes the number and breakdown of cases, per county, to be included in the QSR and how the sample is then selected from a randomized list. It also includes specific information regarding possible elimination of cases from the sample based upon specific criteria, and the process to follow to ensure the randomness of case selection during the QSR.

- **QSR Sampling Methodology**

  The first step to identifying the cases reviewed during Pennsylvania's QSR is establishing how counties will be classified by size; what the size of the sample is to be drawn in each county; and how the samples will be stratified within each county.

- **County Classification**

  For the purposes of this analysis, counties have been divided into eight strata, based on the number of children (dependent and dependent/delinquent) served in each county during federal fiscal year 2014 ***(Appendix 8: Stratification of Counties for QSR).***

- **Definition of Out-of-Home Case (County has custody)**

  The case is an "out-of-home case" if the focus child/youth is in out of home care and the County has care and placement responsibility for the child/youth. This includes a child/youth that is placed by the County with relatives or in other kin-type placements, but the County maintains care and placement responsibility. It does not include a child/youth who is living with relatives (or caregivers other than parents) but who is not under the care and placement responsibility of the County. Out-of-home care means 24-hour substitute care for children/youth placed away from their parents or guardians and for whom the County has placement and care responsibility. This includes, but is not limited to, placements in foster family homes, foster homes of relatives, group homes, emergency shelters, residential facilities, child care institutions, and pre-adoptive homes. A child/youth is in out-of-home care in accordance with this definition regardless of whether the out-of-home care facility is licensed and payments are made by the State or local county for the care of the child/youth, whether adoption subsidy payments are being made prior to the finalization of an adoption, or whether there is Federal matching of any payments that are made.

- **Definition of In-Home Case**

  The case is an "in-home case" if the case has been accepted for services and the focus child/youth is not in out-of-home care (county has custody).

- **Sample Case Selection Instructions for Quality Service Reviews**
  Following the confirmation of the number of cases in a County's QSR sample is the identification of the specific in-home and out-of-home cases from which the random sample will be selected. The "Effective Sampling Date" is 90 days from day one of the County's onsite QSR. The list of in-home and out-of-home cases the County submits to be randomized includes all of the County Agency's open in home and out-of-home cases as of the "Effective Sampling Date." Once the "Effective Sampling Date" has been confirmed, the cases are submitted to Hornby Zeller Associates (HZA) via the secure methods described below.

  - **In-Home Services Sample**

    Counties determine the in-home services case list to be randomized by HZA by submitting a list of all children/youth for all families whose cases are accepted for in-home services as of the "Effective Sampling Date". The list must include the names of every child/youth in the family so that one focus child/youth may be randomly selected for the review. Please refer to ***Appendix 9a (QSR In-Home Sample)***.

    Steps for In-Home Cases:

    - The County creates a list of all children/youth in families whose cases are accepted for in-home services using the Excel spreadsheet for in-home cases ***(Appendix 9a: QSR In-Home Sample)*** based on the above outlined criteria.
    - The County must submit the in-home services case list via secure method (i.e. SeGov) using the following naming convention and submitting in Excel format: **fc(county fips code)ihqsr.xls**
      - *Note: Please do NOT submit this list via email as it contains confidential case information and therefore must be submitted via SeGov*
    - HZA will randomize the list of children/youth in the in-home sample. The randomized list will then be posted back to the County via secure method (i.e. SeGov) with the following naming convention: **fc(county fips code) QSR In Home Sampling Results.xls**
    - HZA will notify the County once the ranked list has been posted to SeGov.
    - The Local and State Site Leads start at the top of this ranked list and identify the appropriate number of in-home cases to be included in the QSR sample and list these cases on the Working Case List ***(Appendix 9b: In-Home Working Case List)*** and then submit this list via email to HZA.
      - From this point on, cases will be referred to by their Random # only and not the County's case numbers. This will allow site leads and HZA to communicate back and

forth about the sample via standard email without the concern of confidential information being compromised.

- Site leads will periodically (about every two weeks) provide HZA an updated Working Case List ***(Appendix 9b: In-Home Working Case List)*** as they prepare cases for the onsite QSR. As site leads discuss possible case eliminations, they will submit the case elimination tracking sheet (see below) as well as the updated working case list that reflects the cases that will be included in the sample for the onsite QSR.

- **Out-of-Home Services Sample**

The out-of-home sample is based on a list of all cases of children/youth in out-of-home care as of the "Effective Sampling Date".

Steps for Out-of-Home Cases:

- The County creates a list of all children/youth in out-of-home care using the Excel spreadsheet for out-of-home cases ***(Appendix 9c: QSR Out-of-Home Sample)***.
- The County must submit the out-of-home services case list via secure method (i.e. SeGov) using the following naming convention and submitting in Excel format: **fc(county fips code)fcqsr.xls**
  - *Note: Please do NOT submit this list via email as it contains confidential case information and therefore must be submitted via SeGov*
- HZA will randomize the list of out-of-home cases and the ranked list will be posted back to the County via secure method (i.e. SeGov) with the following naming convention: **fc(county fips code) QSR Out-of-home Sampling Results.xls**
- HZA will notify the County once the ranked list has been posted to SeGov.
- The Local and State Site Leads start at the top of the ranked list and identify the appropriate number of out-of-home cases to be included in the QSR sample and list them on the Working Case List ***(Appendix 9d: Out-of-Home Working Case List)*** and then submit this list via email to HZA.
  - From this point on, cases will be referred to by their Random # only and not the County's case numbers. This will allow site leads and HZA to communicate back and forth about the sample via standard email without the concern of confidential information being compromised.
  - Site leads will periodically (about every two weeks) provide HZA an updated Working Case List ***(Appendix 9d: Out-of-Home Working Case List)*** as they prepare cases for the onsite QSR. As site leads discuss possible case eliminations, they will submit the case elimination

tracking sheet (see below) as well as the updated working case list that reflects the cases your county will include in the sample for the onsite QSR.

- NOTE: The in-home and out-of-home case lists may be submitted in a document generated by the county information system in lieu of ***Appendix 9a: QSR In-Home Sample*** and ***Appendix 9c: QSR Out-of-Home Sample*** as long as the necessary data elements are captured in the document and in a format HZA can randomize. Local Site Leads interested in this option must contact the identified HZA Lead prior to the "Effective Sampling Date" to discuss requirements for submitting the case sample using a document generated by the county information system.

- **Considerations for Over Sample**
Local Site Lead(s) need to prepare at least two back-up cases (1 in-home case and 1 out-of-home case) from their ranked lists. It is left to the determination of the State and Local Site Leads during the onsite QSR whether a back-up case is used due to a case needing to be excluded at the time of the onsite QSR.

    - NOTE: If the County's QSR occurs over the course of 2 weeks, it is suggested that the back-up cases are scheduled to be reviewed during the latter portion of the onsite QSR (if applicable). For example, the back-up cases will be reviewed during the second week of a two-week onsite QSR.

- **QSR Sample Exclusion Guidelines**
Upon receipt of the sample cases, and up until the date of the onsite QSR, Site Lead teams will need to continuously evaluate each sample case to ensure that no factors exist that would cause it to be excluded from the sample. Local and State Site Lead(s) will use the elimination criteria provided below to make this determination.

  The County schedules QSR case reviews sequentially from the lists, maintaining the exact ranking used in the sample provided by HZA and eliminating cases only after consultation with the HZA Lead (based upon the criteria listed below).

- **Criteria for Eliminating Cases from Sample Lists**
Local Site Leads must record the reasons for eliminating cases from the sample and submit these cases to the identified HZA Lead for review and approval. The County must list any case(s) that meet the exclusion criteria and provide those reason(s) on the Case Elimination Tracking Excel spreadsheet ***(Appendix 9e: Case Elimination Tracking Sheet)***. The HZA Lead will review the proposed cases and notify the Local and State Site Leads regarding their approval to eliminate the identified cases from the sample. Conference calls with the HZA Lead and/or the CQI Project Managers may be held to discuss case eliminations.

The County may request that a case is eliminated from the sample for the following reasons:

- A case reported in the original sampling list in error, such as:
    - An out-of-home case when the child/youth was discharged before the "Effective Sampling Date";
    - An in-home case which was officially closed (i.e. closing letter sent) before the "Effective Sampling Date," resulting in no County responsibility for the case;
    - An out-of-home case open for subsidized adoption or Permanent Legal Custodianship (PLC) payment only; and
    - A case in which the target child/youth is or was in the care and/or responsibility of another state, and Pennsylvania is providing supervision through an Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) agreement.

- Cases in which the "key individuals" are unavailable during the days of the onsite QSR or are completely unwilling to be interviewed, even by telephone.
    - "Key individuals" in a case are the child/youth, the parent(s), the foster parent(s) and/or caregivers and the Caseworker.
        - There may be cases, however, that should not be eliminated even though key individuals are unavailable. Before eliminating these cases, the Site Lead team should determine whether sufficient information and perspectives can be obtained from the available parties. If the Local and State Site Leads determine that the case should be eliminated, the Site Lead team should consult with the HZA Lead for approval to eliminate the case.
    - Local Site Lead(s) should make reasonable efforts to seek the participation of key individuals in the case to ensure the validity of the random sample.
        - Reasonable efforts must include making phone calls, sending letters and conducting home visits.
    - Cases involving out-of-county or out-of-state family members or services are considered on a case by case basis, depending on the availability of key individuals.

- Children/youth on runaway status may be excluded only if they are on runaway status continuously from the "Effective Sampling Date" up until two weeks prior to the date of the onsite QSR. If a child/youth is not able to be located, but is not listed on National Crime and Information Center (NCIC), then the County must make reasonable efforts to locate the child/youth, as this child/youth's case will be reviewed as part of the sample.
    - Runaway status means that the child/youth has been listed on NCIC.

- All other children/youth within a family are excluded after an eligible child/youth from the family is included in the sample.

- Eliminate a case if any child/youth is charged as an adult and/or is incarcerated in an adult correctional facility.

- Situations in which case selection would result in over representation of the County Agency's staff (i.e. Caseworker, Supervisor and Administrator). These situations should be discussed with HZA Lead and Local and State Site Leads. The rationale for adding these exclusions is to avoid an overrepresentation of staff. All of these requests have been approved. Most counties request a two case maximum per caseworker and/or supervisor. The over-representation criteria that is established for a county's sample is to be applied throughout the sampling period. Any request to change the over-representation criteria during the sampling period should be discussed with the HZA lead to ensure integrity of the sample. NOTE: Requests for exclusions based on an over-representation of the public or private provider agency serving the child/youth/family is not an allowable exclusion at this time.

- A case which has been closed (including documentation of closing) more than 30 days prior to day one of the onsite QSR.

- Situations in which Site Lead members may have conflict of interest issues regarding cases that are identified in the sample.
    - Actions should be taken to ensure that any Site Lead team member with a conflict of interest related to a case identified in the sample is <u>not</u> designated to support the QSR review team to which the case is assigned.
    - If the Site Lead Team determines that the conflict of interest rises to the level of the case needing to be excluded from the case sample, the Site Lead Team should consult with HZA and CQI Project Managers about the rationale for case exclusion.

- There are concerns that a case selected in the sample will jeopardize the safety of the QSR reviewers.
    - QSR reviewers should never be sent into unsafe situations.
    - The Site Lead Team should work to make alternate arrangements when possible to ensure the safety of the QSR reviewers (i.e. if concerns about safety of a home environment from which a child was removed, attempt to schedule interview with family at the agency).
    - If the Site Lead team determines interviews with key informants in the QSR process cannot be completed due to safety concerns, the Site Lead Team should consult with HZA and CQI Project Managers about the rationale for case exclusion.

- **Case Sampling Issues Surfacing at the Time of the QSR or Resulting From Discrepancies**

The Local and State Site Leads will need to approve decisions to eliminate a case because of last minute developments that result in insufficient information being available to review the case. If an interview with a critical party to the case is cancelled at the last minute, for example, the case should be discussed among the Site Leads.

The child/youth that is the focus of the QSR is to be seen by QSR reviewers during the course of the onsite QSR (in person or via Skype/live video stream). If the child/youth is not able to be seen during the onsite QSR, then the case is to be excluded from the final data for the county's QSR. This exclusion is based on the rationale that potential liability issues could arise should a child/youth be rated by reviewers as safe, when in fact, the reviewers have not visually seen the child/youth to confirm the child/youth is safe. If QSR reviewers are able to score the case to the best of their ability based on the interviews that are able to be conducted, they can rate the case and provide information gathered and feedback to the caseworker/supervisor, based on the information that was able to be collected.

- Frequently Asked Questions

During the course of phased-in implementation, there have been questions that have been asked regarding case sampling and exclusions. Please refer to **Appendix 9f: Case Sampling and Exclusion Process: Frequently Asked Questions,**

State Site Lead Note: The role of the State Site Leads during the case selection process is to provide support to the Local Site Leads. HZA will identify a lead for each county's sampling process who will consult with the State and Local Site Leads regarding the elimination of cases based on certain criteria, such as key individuals being unwilling to participate in the review to ensure that the appropriate steps have been taken prior to approving the elimination of the case. There will be regular contact via e-mail or conference calls to discuss case eliminations. Final decisions regarding sample selection will be made by the HZA Lead.

The details should be reviewed with the Site Lead team throughout ongoing meetings of the Site Lead team from the "Effective Sampling Date" through the onsite QSR.

IX. QSRs and Licensing

Purpose: Defining quality practice is a key component in shifting Pennsylvania's quality improvement efforts away from compliance based requirements. Pennsylvania has learned that if quality practice is not defined, it is too easy to fall back into a compliance based way of evaluating practice. Furthermore, Pennsylvania has learned that "true CQI goes beyond basic compliance and focuses on continuous learning about practice and outcomes" (Casey Family Programs, 2005).

- OCYF has been shifting from a compliance focus to a culture focused on quality. Regional Office staff has commented that they found out more about a County's operations, strengths and challenges by participating in a Quality Service Review than from 3 years' worth of annual inspections.

- OCYF Regional Office staff will work with the County to plan for the Licensing inspection that is completed in conjunction with a state-supported QSR.

- For those counties who have participated in a state-supported QSR occur during the licensing review period, the cases that were part of the QSR will be used as part of the sample numbers and, in most circumstances, this will meet the minimum required In-Home and Placement sample size needed. Regional Office Representatives will work with QSR counties in advance of the inspection to determine what additional cases may need to be pulled to meet the minimum sample size for the other areas of casework services.

- It is important to note that any annual inspection citations and licensing decisions are based solely on regulatory and statutory compliance findings.

X. Scheduling of Case-Specific Interviews

Purpose: Interviews are the primary mechanism for gathering information and forming the basis for case scoring therefore, the scheduling of case-specific interviews is an important part of the QSR preparation. Local Site Lead(s) must ensure that all key case participants are contacted, fully informed about the purpose and process, and scheduled for an interview.

- The Local Site Lead(s) for each county will have primary responsibility for the scheduling of case-specific interviews. Other County Agency staff may be asked to assist with scheduling, as needed.

- Each Caseworker that has a case selected for review and/or County Agency Quality Assurance staff will provide the Local and State Site Lead(s) with:

    - **The Case Summary and Case Contact Sheet:** Please refer to ***Appendix 10: Case Summary*** and ***Appendix 11: Case Contact Sheet***. It is suggested that these be turned in as soon as possible, but at least 5 weeks prior to onsite QSR in preparation for interviews to be set up.
        - Case summary information: Provide brief summary of the case history that provides a snapshot of the child/youth and family situation.
        - Case contact information: Provide a list of persons to be interviewed in the case and contact information. NOTE: Persons to be interviewed should have had significant involvement with the family during the three to six months prior to the onsite QSR.
    - **Releases of Information:** If required by the County, consent forms should be signed to allow interviewees to share information with the reviewers.
        - Copies of existing releases should be returned to the Local Site Lead(s) at least five weeks prior to the onsite QSR.
        - Where applicable, the child/youth and family will sign a release of information for persons to be interviewed, which will be provided by the Local Site Lead(s). These releases can be found as: ***Appendices 12a: Parent/Caregiver's Authorization to Obtain and Release Information, 12b: Youth's Authorization to Obtain and Release Information, and 12c: Consent to Obtain/Release Confidential Drug and Alcohol Information***.
        - The Local Site Lead(s) should review the case contact information and the releases and ensure that there is a release for persons to be interviewed, when one is needed.

    - **Partially completed QSR Roll-up Sheet *(Appendix 20: QSR Roll-Up Sheet)*:** This document will provide the background and demographic information on the child/youth and family as well as case information. County staff filling out the hard copy of the QSR Roll-up Sheet should be provided with a hard copy of the QSR Roll-Up Sheet Guidance ***(Appendix 21: QSR Roll-Up Sheet Guidance)*** in addition to the Roll-Up Sheet document, as the guidance provides clarification regarding the information to be collected. Staff should complete the data elements about the "Focus Child/Youth Information" and "Case Information" only.
        - NOTE: QSR reviewers will be required to verify all the information during the onsite QSR to ensure that the information they enter onto the web-based copy of the QSR Roll-Up Sheet is correct.

- Ideally, the person scheduling interviews for a particular case should contact the assigned County Caseworker and review the above referenced materials in advance of scheduling the interviews. The scheduler should ensure that persons listed as potential interviewees have had significant contact with the family during the three to six months prior to the onsite QSR. The Caseworker should also be asked if there are any other individuals that should be added to the Case Contact Sheet, and if there are any travel, culture, language, or other barriers that should be considered in scheduling interviews.

- In the event there are numerous persons listed, the Local Site Lead(s) should work with the Caseworker and State Site Leads to prioritize interviews. A maximum of 6-12 interviews is suggested for each case. The number of interviews should NOT exceed 12.

- During the onsite QSR, it is possible that reviewers may request additional interviews to be scheduled based on information gathered.

- Scheduling of interviews occurs at least two to five weeks prior to the onsite QSR. Every attempt should be made to finalize the interview schedules prior to the QSR training for reviewers, but no later than one week prior to the first day of the onsite QSR, as this will give the Local Site Lead(s) ample time to arrange scheduling for Caseworker/Supervisor Feedback Sessions and to notify County staff and reviewers of the schedules.
    - Last minute changes and/or cancellations are to be expected, so be prepared to be flexible and responsive to these events.

- The Local Site Lead(s) or other County staff assisting with scheduling will contact all persons to be interviewed for that case and develop an interview schedule for the days the case is being reviewed. Persons to be interviewed may include the focus child/youth, current Caseworker, current casework

Supervisor, parents, relative caregivers, other significant relatives/kin, foster parents, Guardian ad Litems, service providers, teachers, physicians, psychiatrists, therapists, and informal support persons. Interviews should be arranged at a time and place convenient for persons being interviewed and whenever possible, interviews should be done in person

- An example of a 3 day interview schedule can be found at ***Appendix 13a: QSR Completed Interview Schedule***. There is a blank interview schedule that can be filled out by interview schedulers. This can be found at ***Appendix 13b: QSR Blank Interview Schedule***.

- The suggested process for scheduling interviews:

    - The Local Site Lead(s) or County-identified scheduler should contact the family by telephone or in person. Utilizing/referencing a script may be helpful. Please refer to ***Appendix 14a: Guidelines for Talking to Families about the QSR*** or ***14b: Guidelines for Talking to Families about the QSR*** for examples of what to say. The purpose of this communication will be to:
        - Inform the interviewee that they have been randomly selected for participation in the Quality Service Review process and answer any questions they have about the review process.
        - Schedule the interview for a time and location convenient for the individual(s).
            - Children/youth should not be interviewed at school.
            - Generally, parent/child/youth interviews should be scheduled in their home, unless the family is not agreeable, then an alternative community/agency location can be arranged.
            - It is recommended that interviews with the child/youth be done at their caregiver’s residence, but separately from the child/youth’s caregivers.
        - Find out if there is anyone the family would like to have interviewed as part of this process (remember there are limited timeframes for interviews so it may not be possible to schedule everyone).

- In the event that the family can not be reached, an introductory letter can be sent and followed up with a telephone call. ***Appendix 14c: Introductory Letter to Parent (Open Case)*** and ***Appendix 14d: Introductory Letter to Parent (Closed Case)*** are examples of letters that can be utilized in these instances. An example of an introductory letter to be used with service providers is also available at ***Appendix 14e: Introductory Letter to Service Provider***. As follow up, contact those who received letters to arrange an interview time and location and to answer any questions they have about the process. Clarify if they will require a release to participate in the interview.
    - If releases are required ensure that necessary signatures are obtained and copies are provided to those being interviewed and the reviewers.

- All interviewees should receive a confirmation letter confirming their interview date, time and location ***(Appendix 14f: Interview Confirmation Letter).***

- The following brochures explaining the QSR process are also available to be provided to parents/caregivers, older youth and system partners. Please refer to the following: **Appendix 14g: QSR Brochure (Parents/Caregivers)**, **Appendix 14h: QSR Brochure (Older Youth)**, and **Appendix 14i: QSR Brochure (System Partners)**.

- Each county may decide whether or not to grant any form of honorarium to a family for voluntary participation in the QSR process, including interview and/or focus group participation. Please reference ***Appendix 15: Honorarium Protocol for Participation in the Pennsylvania Quality Service Review Process*** for more information on guidance for implementation.

- Prior to the onsite QSR, it can be helpful to call and confirm all scheduled interviews.

Points to consider when scheduling interviews:

- Make sure to allow enough travel time between appointments and allow some time for flexibility, including allowing time for the reviewers to eat lunch. Provide reviewers with maps/written directions to each location and have printed out copies of these for the onsite QSR.

- Provide identifying information regarding persons being interviewed. For example, rather than identifying someone as a therapist, indicate the name of the person for whom they are the therapist and from which agency.

- Consider who is being interviewed when determining length of time for an interview. In general, parents and foster parents should be allowed 1 ½ hours for interviews. Consider scheduling more time if an older focus child/youth will be interviewed during the same appointment time. Time should be allotted for the focus child/youth to be seen and interviewed as appropriate to their age and developmental level (for example, 15 minutes may be adequate for a 5 year old child, while a 17 year old youth may require 30-45 minutes). At least 45 minutes should be allotted for most provider interviews. Thirty minutes is not sufficient for most interviews, unless it is a phone interview.

- Persons to be interviewed should have had substantial contact with the focus child and/or family over the past <u>three to six months</u> prior to the onsite QSR. It is generally not helpful to interview persons who have not had contact for several months, as they do not have current information relevant to the QSR.

- Interviews on the first day of the onsite QSR may be scheduled into the early evening hours to accommodate family work schedules and the number of interviews required. Interviews on the second day often start early to accommodate teachers and others who cannot generally meet during regular business hours.

- School and medical personnel generally have limited times in their day when they can schedule appointments. It may be helpful to schedule these interviews first and then schedule other interviews around them.

- Allow time (usually 1-2 hours) for the QSR reviewers to review the case file and assess specific questions prior to the initial interview with the Caseworker/Supervisor.

- Allow ample time for the QSR reviewers to score, have consultation with Site Leads about scoring, and complete the QSR Roll-Up Sheet.

- Once interviews have been scheduled for a case, the Local Site Lead(s) will send the completed schedule to the assigned Caseworker and Supervisor for that family. Caseworker and Supervisors are to hold the identified time for which they are scheduled to be interviewed as well as the time identified for the Caseworker/Supervisory Feedback Session. Schedulers should be respectful and mindful of each Caseworker and Supervisor's time when conducting initial scheduling.

- During routinely scheduled meetings with the Local Site Leads, State Site Leads should review which individuals are being scheduled for each case to assure that the QSR reviewers will be able to interview all key parties involved in a case and to confirm logistics of any extended travel for QSR reviewers, language/cultural barriers, etc.

- State Site Leads should receive copies of all the Interview Schedules and Case Summary sheets. The State Site Lead(s) will then forward the Interview Schedule and Case Summary to the QSR review team members assigned to each case. These documents are to be password protected and emailed, assuring to send the password to open the documents in a separate email.
  - State Site Leads should speak with CQI Project Managers if they are not sure about how to password protect documents.

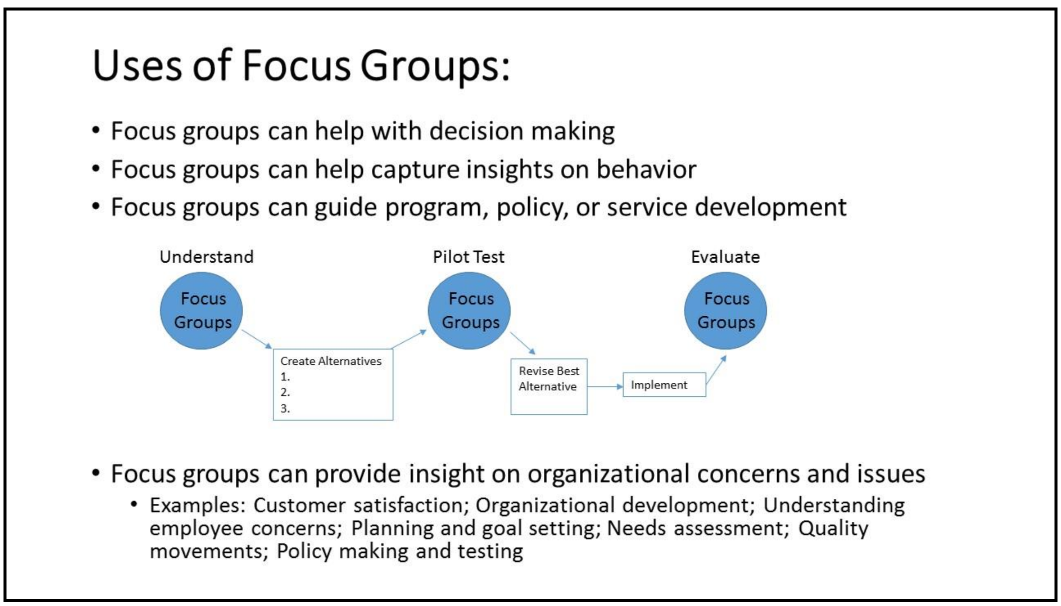
State Site Lead Note: Scheduling interviews takes a considerable amount of time to complete. The Site Lead Team should work collaboratively and provide frequent support to the interview scheduler to help ensure the process goes smoothly. State Site Leads should work with the Local Site Leads to ensure that all the critical people in a case have been scheduled for an interview, that there are no more than 12 interviews and that the first interview on the schedule is with the county Caseworker and supervisor (if at all possible).

XI. Focus Groups and Key Stakeholder Interviews

Purpose: The QSR process combines the use of focus groups and key stakeholder interviews with the use of in depth case reviews to create a multi-method qualitative inquiry process. Focus group and key stakeholder interviews provide information about local practices, resources, collaboration, coordination, and working conditions that helps to provide context for and explain the case-specific review findings which provide a set of micro-point, drill-down analyses that reveal how well children, youth and their caregivers are benefiting from practices and services they are receiving in local sites. The micro and macro views of practice are combined to develop a big picture understanding of local review results and factors that have shaped current outcomes.

- **Focus Groups**

  - The purpose of conducting a focus group is to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, idea, product or service. Focus groups are used to gather opinions.



  - Characteristics of a focus group:
    - Focus groups involve people: Typically 5-8 people but the size can range from as few as 4 to as many as 12. The group must be small enough for everyone to have the opportunity to share insights, yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. Focus groups are not an open meeting, but rather participants are invited to attend. Invitations ensure that participants have the required characteristics and the group is the right size.
    - The people possess certain characteristics: Focus groups are composed of participants who are similar to each other in a way

that is important to the research/evaluation being conducted. The nature of this homogeneity is determined by the purpose of what is being evaluated. It is most important to give you the type of information you need.
    - Focus groups provide qualitative data. The data in the focus group is solicited through open-ended questions.
    - Focus groups have a focused and guided discussion: Questions for focus groups are predetermined and sequenced, so that they are easy to understand and logical to the participants. Questions near the beginning are more general, but as the group continues, the questions become more specific and focused. There is no pressure to have the group reach consensus; rather, attention is placed on understanding the feelings, comments and the thought processes of participants as they discuss the issues

- The initial plans for the focus groups and key stakeholder interviews should be discussed with the County team during the first Orientation Meeting and then at subsequent Site Lead team meetings.

- The Local and State Site Leads will work together to determine an appropriate facilitator and note taker. The facilitator and note taker can be someone from the site lead team. Most likely it will be State Site Lead staff that are the facilitator and/or note taker. The facilitator can be a third party facilitator (i.e. OCYF or CWRC staff/consultants who are not directly working with the County at the time).
    - Having an experienced third party facilitator can allow for the prevention of any feelings of nervousness or unease that participants may feel in sharing their opinions with someone they know.

- Counties are <u>required</u> to conduct a focus group with Caseworkers and a focus group with Supervisors.

- Counties are encouraged but not required to conduct further focus groups. Additional stakeholders to consider involving in a focus group include representatives of the following:

    - Foster/Adoptive/Resource parents
    - Law enforcement and/or Probation/Parole representatives
    - Children's Roundtable
    - Legal representatives
    - Birth parents/kinship families
    - Service providers
    - Mental health and physical health agencies
    - Educational professionals (i.e. schools, special education or early intervention/early childhood coordinators)

    - Local child and family advocacy organizations
    - Local representatives of administrative review bodies (i.e. foster care review boards, if they exist)
    - Youth being served by the local child welfare agency, particularly those eligible for independent living services
        - *Child/youth participation in focus groups should be based on the child/youth developmental and cognitive abilities.*
        - *Efforts should also be made to include youth/alumni (18-21) who have aged out of the foster care system (group meeting)*
    - Tribal representatives
    - Any other community agency with whom the County works or refers families for services (i.e. domestic violence services, parenting programs, family preservation, wrap-around services)

- The County and site lead team to work together to determine the purpose for the focus groups that will be conducted. When determining purpose, site leads should consider the following:
    - What is the problem you want to address?
    - What led up to the decision to conduct a focus group?
    - What kinds of information do you want?
    - What types of information are most important?
    - Who wants the information?
    - How will you use the information?

- Once the purpose is established, the County and the Site Lead team will develop the written purpose statement for each focus group. Based on the purpose statement, the County and the Site Lead team will begin to develop questions that are to be included in the script that will be used by the facilitator and note taker who will be present for the focus group.

- Counties will be <u>required</u> to ask 2-3 questions from a “State Question Bank” which includes questions geared toward assessing systemic factors including: Statewide Information System; Case Review System; Quality Assurance System; Staff and Provider Training; Service Array and Resource Development; Agency Responsiveness to the Community; and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention.
    - These questions will be discussed with the County, the Site Lead team and the assigned CQI Project Manager.

- In addition to the 2-3 questions from the “State Question Bank,” the content of what is discussed in these focus groups should be determined in collaboration with the County and the Site Lead team, as the focus groups should be tailored to meet the County’s need. Developing a question route should include brainstorming, sequencing of questions, phrasing of questions, and estimating time for questions.

- Sample focus group questions can be found in ***Appendix 16e: QSR Focus Group Questions***.
    - Site Lead Teams may reach out to the Quality Improvement Supervisor, Cindy Gore (lcg7@pitt.edu), if interested in gaining assistance from older youth who may aid in the development and potential facilitation of focus group sessions with older youth.
    - Site Lead Teams may reach out to Quality Improvement Supervisor, Cindy Gore (lcg7@pitt.edu), if interested in gaining assistance from Parent Ambassadors who may be available to assist in the development and potential facilitation of focus group sessions with birth parents or kinship families.

- CWRC Research and Evaluation staff will be available to review the purpose statements and questions that are developed for focus groups.
    - If Site Lead teams are interested in tapping into the expertise of the CWRC Research and Evaluation staff to assist in finalizing the purpose statement and script of questions for the focus groups, please allow ample time for review, consultation and finalization of these components in advance of the scheduled focus group(s).

- Focus group scripts are also to include the following statement so that focus group participants can assent to their participation.
    - *[Name of the agency]* is gathering information about the child welfare system in attempt to find out what is working in the system as well as those thing that could be improved. As part of this process, we would like to speak with you about your thoughts, opinions, ideas and experiences. By agreeing to participate in this process, you are agreeing to spend *[amount of time]* to share your input as part of a facilitated discussion. The purpose of coming together is to gather information about *[purpose of the focus group]*. *[Note Taker's Name]* will be writing/typing notes during the discussion. Your participation in the focus group is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question that feels uncomfortable. Please know that your name will not be included in any reports we write about this focus group discussion. The information that you provide during the focus group will be used by the County and those people supporting the county in their improvement efforts to make improvements to the child welfare system. Your opinions, experiences and ideas are very important. If you have questions right now about participating in the focus group study, please let us know. If you have any questions in the future, you can contact the *[Local Site Lead's Name]* and he/she will try to answer your questions.

- Unless otherwise agreed to by the State Site Lead and Local Site Lead(s), the Local Site Lead(s) will be responsible for inviting individuals to participate in the focus groups/interviews as well as the logistics to set up the locations for all focus groups as well as any amenities (i.e. child care, snacks, incentives).
    - Focus groups should be scheduled around the time of the QSR, but the focus groups do not need to occur during the onsite QSR. Timing should be based on the availability of focus group participants as well as the focus group facilitator and note taker.
        - If the groups of key stakeholders (i.e. Children's Roundtable) have standing meetings, it should be considered whether the focus group can/should occur during one of the standing meetings, if they would allow the time to be used to conduct a focus group.
        - If scheduled during the onsite QSR days, it is best to schedule the groups at times when reviewers are conducting interviews so the attention of the Site Leads can be on ensuring the focus groups are executed appropriately; therefore, it is suggested that the majority of these meetings occur in the afternoon of the first day or morning of the second day of each review.
        - It can be helpful to hold focus groups and key stakeholder interviews after the onsite QSR once the County and Site Lead team have received the preliminary/final data from the QSR, as a focus group could be used to dig deeper into the data/information gathered as part of the QSR case review process.
        - Focus groups should occur in advance of County Improvement Plan development to ensure that the information garnered from stakeholders can be applied in the critical thinking process conducted as part of the development of the County Improvement Plan (CIP).

- Identification and recruitment of focus group participants should include a process for sampling, consideration of an appropriate number of participants as well as representative composition of the group. Participants can be selected for the focus group by any method chosen by the Local and State Site Leads. However, as participants are chosen, consideration should be given to ensuring a representative group of participants. For example, the Caseworker group should include participants who have been with the Agency for different amounts of time, who work in different areas of casework (intake, ongoing/family services, placement, etc.), and who represent different ages, races, and genders.

- When recruiting participants, Site Leads should consider the following:

- Select dates, times, and places that are convenient for participants
- Make personal contacts with potential participants
- Invite participants at least two weeks in advance
- Give thought to who will extend the invitation to participants
- Slightly over recruit
- After the participant agrees, send a personalized confirmation letter
- Make a reminder call the day before the focus group

- A communication should be sent to individuals and agencies inviting them to participate in the appropriate focus group/interviews. A confirmation letter/email should be sent to those individuals who have indicated a willingness to participate in a focus group. Sample communications for recruitment of focus group participants can be found in ***Appendix 16a: Focus Group Email (Caseworkers), Appendix 16b: Focus Group Email (Supervisors), Appendix 16c: Focus Group Email (Public Agencies)***, and ***Appendix 16d: Focus Group Email (Private Providers)***.

- **Focus Group Logistics**

  - Once the purpose statement and script for each focus group is finalized, the focus group facilitator and note taker should consult to ensure that they are on the same page on how to ensure that the note taker is able to capture the notes as the facilitator facilities the session based on the script.

  - During the focus group, the focus group facilitator and note take will be introduced. The assent statement will be read and the facilitator will follow the script of questions. The questions are to be asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. The goal of the facilitator is to promote the sharing of experiences and perceptions among participants. Participants build upon and add to the comments of others, adding richness in dialogue that could not be achieved through a one-on-one interview. The note taker will take notes during the discussion on the template provided by the HZA lead. Direct quotes can be captured, but no direct quotes are to be attributed to any individual participant.

  - After the focus group, focus group facilitators and note takers are to work together to review the notes from the focus group session. The script (including the purpose statement, assent and script of questions) are to be submitted with the notes on the note taking template provided by HZA. These materials are to be submitted to the CQI Project Lead and the HZA Lead.

- The HZA Lead will review information submitted by the focus group facilitator and note taker and conduct analysis of the information gathered. Consultation with the focus group facilitator and note taker may be conducted following the focus group in an attempt to aid in the HZA Lead's analysis. Once analysis is completed, a Focus Group Report will be provided to the CQI Project Managers and the Site Lead team. The Site Lead team is responsible for provide the Focus Group Report the County. The Focus Group Report should be considered as a resource during County Improvement Plan development.

- **Key Stakeholder Interviews**

  - Key stakeholder interviews may also be conducted to include the voices and experiences of other persons of special importance. Key stakeholder interviews are often used to supplement focus group interviews. Key stakeholders are persons who are linked to local practice by virtue of their role or agency involvement. Examples of persons who may participate in a key stakeholder interview would include a Judge, Agency Solicitor, County Sheriff or Police Chief, Chief Probation Officer, Director of the domestic violence shelter, and County board chairperson. These persons often hold very useful information about how things work locally and why. By combining case review findings, focus group themes, and key stakeholder observations, a rich and useful understanding of local practices and results can be achieved.

XII. Logistics

Purpose: To provide County agencies with some logistical information to assist in the preparation for the onsite Quality Service Review. The information outlined below will help provide a foundation for an enhanced reviewing environment.

- Following the first Orientation Meeting, the State Site Lead(s) and the Local Site Lead(s) will determine the logistical issues pertaining to the onsite QSR. These issues include:
    - Room Reservations for:
        - A home base or central location for the duration of the onsite QSR days (i.e. area where reviewers convene, where Site Leads are stationed, where case file records are kept, etc.);
        - Interview rooms accommodating individuals who are interviewed at the Agency and/or for phone interviews that review teams will be conducting;
        - Focus groups;
        - Caseworker/Supervisor Feedback Sessions;
        - Case-Specific Team debriefings; and
        - Exit Conference.
    - Speakerphone access for telephone interviews:
        - Assure that any necessary long distance codes and directions on how to use the phone are documented for QSR reviewers.
        - NOTE: It can be helpful to outline some of this logistical information on ***Appendix 22: Local Area Information At-A-Glance***.
    - Transportation arrangements: identification of County/State vehicles that may need to be utilized, if necessary, for traveling to interviews.

- The Site Lead team may want to consider establishing an "Emergency Weather Protocol" for any 2 day trainings or any onsite QSRs that has been scheduled during the winter months or times where inclement weather is possible. Site Leads should schedule "back-up" training dates in the event that poor weather requires them to cancel the original training dates. Site Leads should also work together to create a protocol in the event that poor weather interferes with the actual onsite QSR (and consider what notification of a cancellation looks like, etc.) to include a communication plan for communicating with QSR reviewers.

- Other preparations including parking, security, and building access (during and after hours) must be planned for on a county-by-county basis and are at the discretion of Local Site Lead(s). It can also be helpful to have staff from the County or Agency's technology department available in case there are any technology issues that arise, as wireless and/or Wi-Fi technology will be used during the course of the onsite QSR.

- Name tags/stickers should be made for all QSR reviewers to assist Agency staff and other employees in identifying QSR reviewers and to provide identification of reviewers to family and community members.

- Site Leads should consider (when applicable) providing other items which may aid reviewers in completing their review including access to landline telephones, sufficient space to work and outlets/extension cords for use of laptop computers.

- Case files must be made ready for review by the date of the onsite QSR. The case file should be orderly and as up to date as possible **(*Appendix 17: Case Record Preparation*)**. The Local Site Lead(s) will print documents or request that staff print documents from any applicable County Agency electronic data sources (not already included in the case file) for inclusion in packets given to reviewers for the onsite QSR. Local Site Lead(s) may want to provide a file guide that will assist reviewers with locating key documents within the case file. Case files are not to be removed from the room in which QSR reviewers are working.

- Review teams are encouraged to stay hydrated and maintain their health throughout the onsite review. Therefore, access to water is appreciated. If water is not accessible, notification to QSR reviewers before the onsite QSR is requested, if water fountains will not be readily accessible.

- Suggestions for hotel accommodations and recommendations for restaurants may be helpful to the reviewers (including menu options for local eateries). This should include eateries with quick service, if possible.
  - Lodging options need to be provided to QSR review team members well in advance of the onsite QSR so that reviewers can secure lodging.

- Items such as name tents, pens, paper, highlighters, and post-it notes for file review and interviews may be helpful for reviewers. A shred box for papers to be shredded should also be provided during the onsite QSR.

- Site Lead team members should work with the Resource Specialist from the Child Welfare Resource Center to prepare any additional resources (i.e. posters, additional handouts, etc.) that might be requested during the onsite QSR.

State Site Lead Note: The logistical details should be discussed amongst Local and State Site Leads at the outset of the first Orientation Meeting and more specifics should be reviewed throughout the ongoing pre onsite QSR Site Lead and Orientation meetings. The third Orientation Meeting with Caseworkers/Supervisors who have cases being reviewed should also include components regarding logistics specific to preparing the information that must be available for the QSR reviewers during the onsite review.

XIII. Onsite QSR

Purpose: The onsite QSR is the review of a randomly selected case and includes a brief record review and interviews with key team members involved in the case. The case is then rated based on information gathered and recommendations are provided via Caseworker/Supervisor Feedback Sessions and Case-Specific Team Debriefing sessions. Local and State Site Leads are encouraged to support the review team in any way needed to complete their review in an objective and strength-based manner. This may include, but is not limited to, setting the pace of work, assisting reviewers with the resolution of concerns with their assigned case and processing case ratings and rationale, etc.

- **Preparations for the Onsite QSR**

  - The Local Site Lead(s) will prepare and provide a packet of case-specific information for each QSR review team. The packet will include the following:

    - A finalized Case Summary Sheet regarding the focus child/youth and family ***(Appendix 10: Case Summary)***.
      - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
      - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Leads
    - A finalized case-specific interview schedule ***(Appendix 13b: QSR Blank Interview Schedule***.
      - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
      - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Lead
      - NOTE: An examples of a completed interview schedule can be found in ***Appendix: 13a: QSR Completed Interview Schedule***.
    - A hardcopy of the onsite QSR schedule which can be edited to be county-specific. A template of the schedule can be found in ***Appendix 18: Review Week Schedule***.
      - 1 copy for each QSR review team
    - Directions to offsite interview locations and any logistic information.
      - 1 copy of directions to each location for the QSR review team
    - A hardcopy of ***Appendix 20: QSR Roll-Up Sheet*** with the requested case-specific information filled out. This should be completed by either the Caseworker/Supervisor or identified County staff. ***Appendix 21: QSR Roll-Up Sheet Guidance*** should be referenced when filling out this information.
      - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
      - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Leads
    - County-specific information for reviewers ***(Appendix 22: Local Area Information At-A-Glance)***.
      - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer

    - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Leads
  - Case file guide (if available).
    - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
  - If QSR reviewers are to disseminate the QSR Participant Feedback Forms, then the appropriate number of QSR Participant Feedback forms (and self-addressed /stamped envelopes) should be provided to reviewers based on the number of people that are being interviewed as part of the case review. Please access this form in ***Appendix 25: QSR Participant Feedback Form***.
    - If QSR reviewers are expected to wait for the forms, then time needs to be allotted in their schedules to wait for the forms to be completed. Plain envelopes will need to also be provided to QSR reviewers so interviewees can place their feedback form in the sealed envelope to help ensure confidentiality. If QSR participants do not fill out the forms following the interview, QSR reviewers can provide the interviewees with the feedback form and a self-addressed and stamped envelope so that the form can be returned to the County Agency.
  - If site leads would like QSR Participant Feedback Forms to be disseminated via an email, there are two options.
    - Option 1: A web-link can be provided to site leads for their dissemination of the link to QSR reviewers.
    - Option 2: The email addresses of QSR Participants can be provided to CQI Project Leads for dissemination of the web-link.
  - The case file/record for each case included in the review must also be available.

- The State Site Lead(s) will be responsible for coordinating with the Resource Specialist from the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) to assure that all materials required and requested are included in the QSR Onsite Box based on materials outlined in the Workshop Directory Page for *521: Quality Service Review – Onsite Box.*

  <u>Required Materials for the QSR Onsite Box:</u>
  - Handout #1 - One copy of QSR Protocol for each review team
    - NOTE: This is provided in the event that a QSR reviewer forgets to bring his/her copy of the QSR Protocol that they received at the training. These QSR Protocols should not be written in by QSR reviewers and should be collected by the State Site Lead(s) at the conclusion of the onsite QSR.
    - NOTE: State Site Leads are responsible for returning these QSR Protocols to CWRC.
  - Handout #2 - Confidentiality forms ***(Appendix 23: Confidentiality Form)*** which must be signed by each reviewer and collected by the State Site Lead(s) before they begin their review. Confidentiality Forms are also to be signed by all Site Leads. Completed

confidentiality forms should be scanned into a PDF file and emailed to the CQI Project Managers.
  - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
  - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Leads
- Handout #3 - ***Appendix 24: QSR Reviewer Feedback Form***
  - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
  - NOTE: To be turned in to Site Leads. Completed forms (or copies of the completed forms) are to be turned in to CQI Project Managers.
  - NOTE: A web-link of the QSR Reviewer Feedback Form can be either emailed by Site Leads or by CQI Project Managers.
    - CQI Project Managers will need a finalized QSR Team Chart to ensure that the email gets sent to the QSR reviewers that attended the onsite QSR.
- Handout #4 - Notes for Caseworker and Supervisor Feedback Session
  - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
- Handout #5 - Case-Specific Team Debrief Worksheet
  - 2 copies - 1 for each QSR reviewer
- One flash drive for each review team
  - Flash drives are to be secured in advance of the onsite review from the HZA representative by the Site Lead team. The State Site leads are responsible for returning the flash drives to the CQI Project Manager or HZA representative after the onsite QSR. This is usually done after the second level quality assurance review.

<u>Potential Handouts and Materials for the QSR Onsite Box:</u>
- ***Appendix 19: Indicator Rating Rationale***
  - 2 copies (1 each) for the QSR review team
- At-A-Glance Summary of Indicators
  - 2 copies (1 each) for the QSR review team
  - NOTE: These are in the QSR Protocol, but if additional guests attend the Exit Conference, it can be helpful to have this handout for guests.
- Posters
  - Purpose
  - Feedback Session
  - Planning Prior Interview
  - During the Interview
  - After the Interview
  - The Groundhog Rule
  - Case-Specific Team Debriefing
  - Central Scoring Rules
  - Role of the Reviewer
- Other items:
  - Blank Flip Chart Pads

- Colored Markers
- Masking Tape/Poster Putty
- Name Tents
- Flip Chart Stands
- Laptop
- LCD Screen
- LCD Projector
- Post-it notes
- Pens
- Pencils
- Highlighters
- Power strips
- Extension cords
- Tissues

<u>Additional Suggested Resources:</u>

- An updated QSR Team Chart ***(Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template)*** for each member of the Site Lead team.
  - Copies (1 each) for each Local and State Site Leads

- CWRC is responsible for all ‘required’ and ‘potential’ handouts and posters requested for the Onsite Box. “Potential materials’ for the Onsite Box (i.e. highlighters, markers, pens, post-its) are items that the Local Site leads have been asked to coordinate and have available. Counties are encouraged to budget for their QSR/CQI efforts (to include supporting the QSR process) via the NBPB guidelines. If needed, the CWRC can supplement materials. CWRC materials not used and/or able to be returned for re-use should be returned to CWRC via the CWRC state site lead representative.

- **During the Onsite QSR**
  - The Site Lead team should arrive before all QSR Reviewers to prepare the room for the onsite QSR – hanging posters, putting out materials for QSR review teams, placing case files on the tables for QSR reviewers, etc.

  - If all QSR reviewers are accounted for and able to review the cases assigned, then an identified Site Lead should contact the back-up reviewers to advise them that they are not needed for the onsite QSR. If back-up reviewers are to fill in a spot for a QSR reviewer that was unable to attend, the HZA Lead and CQI Project Managers must be advised of the switch.

  - The Site Lead team will provide a welcome and introduction to QSR reviewers during the initial 30 minutes at the beginning of their first day of the onsite QSR.
    - The Local Site Lead(s) can discuss the site-specific logistics (i.e. home base set up, security issues, case file format, interview locations, directions, etc.). The State Site Lead should emphasize key points for

reviewers (i.e. the role of the reviewer, onsite QSR itinerary, timeframes for completing and submitting QSR Roll-Up, reminders about professionalism, explanation of the QSR to all those being interviewed, withholding any judgment until all interviews are complete, etc.).

- Following the welcome and introduction by the Site Lead team, QSR Reviewers should be allotted about 1-2 hours to review their assigned case record prior to interviewing any interviewees.

- Site Lead team members should utilize a framework for any County staff that might be assisting during the onsite QSR. Site Lead team members and/or other County staff may be asked to assist in escorting reviewers to certain areas.

- Local and State Site Leads should be sure to read the case narrative summaries and review the interview schedules to be familiar with all cases, but especially those cases to which the Site Lead is assigned.

- Local and State Site Leads should all be available to answer questions throughout the onsite QSR.

- Site Leads should proactively work with each QSR review team to ensure rating accurateness and consistency. This includes the demographic sections as well as the scoring of the indicators.

- If the focus child/youth is not seen at their scheduled interview, the review team should be instructed to contact their Site Leads who will attempt to make alternate arrangements to see the focus child/youth at another time during the review. In the event that the reviewers, despite reasonable efforts, do not see the focus child/youth, the review team should still proceed with scoring the child/youth/family's case to the best of their ability.
    - It is **<u>mandatory</u>** that the focus child/youth be seen by the review team.
    - Site Lead Teams must notify their HZA leads and their CQI Project Manager if there is a focus child/youth who is not seen
    - The case **<u>will not</u>** be included in the County's final data presentation at the Exit Conference, in the Final Report or as part of the Next Step meeting; however, the web-based Roll-Up Sheet and data collected as part of the case review should be submitted to HZA. HZA will ensure that the case is excluded from the final data set.

- Please refer to the QSR Manual - Section XIV (Case-Specific Team Debriefing), Section XV (Caseworker/Supervisor Feedback Session) and Section XVI (Exit Conference/Preliminary Findings) - for more information of Site Lead responsibilities during key components of the onsite QSR.

- Site Leads must collect all of the USB flash drives before the reviewers depart.

- Remind all QSR Reviewers that edits may be made to the Roll-Up Sheets during the Site Leads second level quality assurance review. See Section XVII (Post Quality Service Review) of QSR Manual for more details. Site Leads will work with each team via email and phone calls to finalize these documents. It is important the Roll-Up Sheets are finalized as soon as feasible so they can be shared with the assigned Caseworkers and Supervisors.

XIV. Case-Specific Team Debriefing

Purpose: The Case-Specific Team Debriefing is designed to provide QSR Reviewers with the opportunity to share what they learned during the case review and also provides an opportunity for the Site Leads to conduct second level quality assurance. QSR review teams and all Site Leads must be present for the Case-Specific Team Debriefing. Sometimes the County's Management team and/or the Caseworker and Supervisors whose cases are being reviewed are also invited to attend.

- As QSR review teams finalize their QSR Roll-Up Sheets, Site Leads should make a list of the order in which QSR review teams will conduct their Case-Specific Team Debriefing.
    - NOTE: It can be helpful to have a strong QSR review team present first.

- Site Leads should prepare for the Case-Specific Debriefing by ensuring that those attending the debriefing can refer to the Roll-Up Sheet scores during case presentations. Roll-Up Sheet information should either be printed out or displayed via a projector so that those listening to case presentations can refer to the ratings that the reviewers assigned for all 23 indicators. This is done so that those participating in the debriefing are able to see each team's scores as they hear the case information presented. Participants are encouraged to give feedback and ask scoring related questions in an effort to increase the review's scoring fidelity.
    - NOTE: It can also be helpful to provide additional handouts of the At-A-Glance Summary of Indicators to those County staff (management and/or Caseworker and Supervisors) that are present for the Case-Specific Team Debriefing.

- Site Leads should review the format of the Case-Specific Team Debriefing by explaining that each QSR review team will presents their scores and rationale. In addition, fellow reviewers and Site Leads will provide input and feedback to the scoring process. Guest should be encouraged to only listen.

- The debriefing provides an opportunity for each review team to individually present the findings and system recommendations to the County's management team.
    - NOTE: By including the managing chain of command in the debriefing, there is a higher degree of transparency within the County Agency regarding the scoring process.

- Site Leads should be sure to take notes during the presentation by each QSR review team, as this information will be helpful following the onsite QSR when Site Leads conduct second level QA.

- Each team has a maximum of 15 minutes for their case presentation (12 minutes to present and 3 minutes for questions from the larger group). QSR reviewers are asked to follow the Case Presentation Outline (page 59-60 of the QSR Protocol – Version 4.0) when presenting their case. Reviewers may also discuss indicators that were difficult to score. Questions and feedback from the group at the end of the presentation may provide additional clarifications that could prompt a review team to change one or more of their scores.
  - NOTE: The information the QSR review team shares with the group during the team debrief should be consistent with what is shared during the Caseworker and Supervisor Feedback Session.

- The length of the Case-Specific Team Debriefing depends upon the number of cases being reviewed.
  - NOTE: For reviews looking at six cases, this meeting is generally scheduled for two hours.
  - NOTE: Be sure to identify a Site Lead as the timekeeper.

State Site Lead Note: The role of the Local and State Site Leads is to facilitate this meeting and provide as much feedback as possible during this discussion, so that scores are as accurate as possible. It is important to make sure the QSR reviewers use the template in the QSR Protocol for their discussion. Remind the teams of the 12-15 minute time limit and appoint a time keeper to ensure it is followed and let the Reviewers know that you will be asking them to conclude their debrief if they go over their time so that each team gets the opportunity to present.

Considerations for planning the Case-Specific Team Debriefings may include the decision to split the teams in half and hold two debriefings at the same time. This may be helpful for larger teams that have more cases that need to be debriefed and will allow each team to have sufficient time to present the case to the group for feedback. In order for this to be successful, Site Leads must be present for the cases for which they are assigned.

XV. Caseworker/Supervisor Feedback Session

Purpose: The onsite QSR process provides an opportunity for the QSR Reviewers to meet with the Caseworker and/or Supervisor at the conclusion of their case review. The focus of this session will be to highlight the current strengths and accomplishments as well as the current challenges or barriers that were identified within the case. QSR Reviewers will also provide recommendations for next steps that could move the practice forward.

- The Local Site Lead(s) or other staff assisting with scheduling should schedule one joint meeting (for a minimum of one hour) with the Caseworker and Supervisor (and Juvenile Probation Office, if it is a Shared Responsibility Case) to allow the QSR Reviewers to provide immediate feedback on their findings to the team.

- Site Leads should encourage Reviewers to review the "Guide to Caseworker and Supervisor Feedback Session" on page 61 of their QSR Protocol – Version 4.0 and use the "Notes for Caseworker and Supervisor Feedback Session" they received in their packets to prepare for the feedback session.

- The Site Lead team may want to consider having State and/or Local Site Leads observe feedback sessions, preferably for a team that they are the lead for conducting second-level quality assurance. Not only is this an opportunity to learn more about the case for the quality assurance, but it is also an opportunity for Site Leads to provide feedback to the QSR Reviewers on how they conducted their feedback session.

XVI. Exit Conference/Preliminary Findings

Purpose: At the Exit Conference, the State and Local Site Leads deliver the preliminary aggregate findings from the entire onsite QSR. The aggregate scores for each of the Child/Family Status indicators and Practice Performance indicators are provided to those present for the meeting. In addition, trends discovered from the focus groups and/or key stakeholder interviews that had been conducted during the onsite QSR could be presented. At the conclusion of this meeting, meeting participants should have an overall picture of the trends and preliminary findings from the onsite QSR.

- State and Local Site Leads are able to collaborate to determine the best delivery of the information via the PowerPoint presentation. See ***Appendix 26: Exit Conference PowerPoint Template*** for an example of what is included in the Exit Conference PowerPoint.

- This meeting is usually scheduled for approximately 90 minutes.

- Participants invited to attend the Exit Conference should be determined in advance of the meeting. Required participants include: State and Local Site Leads. The following people may be invited to this meeting: QSR Reviewers, County level managing chain of command, and the County's management team. Additionally, the County Agency may choose to invite Caseworkers and Supervisors as well as key outside stakeholders representing the private provider community, the courts, advocacy groups, and education, mental health, and medical system partners.

- Please be sure to note that these are preliminary findings and that further quality assurance will occur. Finalized data will be accessible via the QSR Final Report.

- If the Site Lead team has not already done so, they need to assure that they have scheduled time to conduct the second level quality assurance necessary to finalize data collected during the onsite QSR. Information about when post onsite QSR tasks are to be completed by the Site Lead team should be captured on ***Appendix 3a: QSR Team Chart Template***.

XVII. Post Quality Service Review

Purpose: The findings from the QSR presented during the Exit Conference are only preliminary and therefore at the conclusion of the onsite QSR the Local and State Site Leads work collaboratively on a second level of quality assurance of the findings. Immediately following the onsite QSR, the State and Local Site Leads should review, analyze, and distribute the data and information collected. This second level of quality assurance is critical to ensuring that ratings are consistent with the indicator definitions found within the Pennsylvania QSR Protocol, and all QSR rating rationales are written and in line with the core values of PA's Child Welfare Practice Model and the QSR process.

A. Preparing and Analyzing the Findings

- **QSR Roll-Up Sheets:** The Local and State Site Leads are also responsible for reviewing all of the Roll-Up Sheets completed by the QSR Reviewers. It is the Site Leads' role to crosswalk the indicator ratings with the rating rationale. The demographic information should also be reviewed for accuracy and QSR review teams may have to be contacted via email for further clarification. Local Site Leads may be asked to review case file information or gather clarifying information from the Caseworker and/or Supervisor to assure that all information is accurate.

B. Distributing and Communicating the QSR Findings

- Once the QSR Roll-Up Sheets have been finalized, the Local Site Lead(s) should distribute a hardcopy of the document to the Caseworker and Supervisor. (NOTE: The Juvenile Probation Officer and Supervisor of any Shared Case Responsibility cases should also receive the hardcopy QSR Roll-Up Sheet). We recommend that the Caseworker (and Supervisor, when appropriate) hold a team meeting with all family members, professionals and other team members so that the team can discuss a summarization of the overall case-specific findings that were outlined as part of the QSR. This is recommended so that the team can discuss the information garnered via the QSR process and can work together to decide what next steps are most appropriate. We are NOT recommending that a hard copy of the QSR Roll-Up Sheet be given to the child/youth's family and/or team members, but rather that the information and recommendations offered by the QSR reviewers be summarized for the team by the caseworker (and supervisor, when appropriate) for consideration by the team. Ideally, this team meeting should occur within two weeks of the finalization of the QSR Roll-Up Sheet.

- Once the County Caseworker and Supervisor have reviewed the QSR Roll-Up Sheet, they are encouraged to return the QSR Roll-Up Sheet to the county's Local Site Lead for filing of the document in a separate agency CQI file as opposed to the child/youth/family's case file. This recommendation is being made because the information gathered through the QSR process includes case-specific as well as agency/systemic recommendations, which are to be applied for the purpose of supporting the child welfare agency's overall continuous quality improvement efforts.

- Final results and systemic recommendations can be shared with the County Agency as well as key local stakeholders at the Next Steps Meeting. See QSR Manual Section XIX for more information about the Next Steps Meeting.

  - NOTE: Clarifications regarding distribution and maintenance of QSR documents should be directed to CQI Project Managers.

State Site Lead Note:

The timely review and finalization of the QSR Roll-Up Sheets is the primary responsibility of the State and Local Site Leads. The State Site Lead must ensure that this process is organized and that both State and Local Site Leads are aware of the expectations and due dates for finalization. It is most helpful to schedule dates and times with the State and Local Site Leads (either prior to or immediately following the onsite QSR) to ensure that this process goes smoothly.

The second level quality assurance of the rating rationale for the QSR indicator scores needs to ensure that the written summaries provide detailed examples that help to explain the reason for the indicator ratings as well as descriptive information and examples of information gathered as part of the case review process. Second level quality assurance also needs to ensure that no categories that should be "Not Applicable" have been rated and that all appropriate sub-indicators are rated.

XVIII. QSR Final Report

Purpose: The QSR Final Report provides the finalized quantitative data collected during the week(s) of the onsite QSR, as well as relevant data from other sources. This includes demographic information and the final indicator scores for the Child/Youth and Family Status Indicators as well as the Practice Performance Indicators. The QSR Final Report shall act as a springboard for the Continuing Quality Improvement (CQI) process ***(Appendix 27: QSR Final Report Template).***

- Once the QSR Roll-Up Sheets are finalized, the written QSR Final Report will be able to be generated.

- The Site Lead team should collaborate with the County's management team to identify whether or not they would like to receive any additional analysis of the QSR results. The Site Lead team has the option of identifying up to 3 indicators reflecting areas of strength and 3 indicators that are opportunities for improvement to receive more detailed analysis on from HZA. The team may also choose to identify themes or specific profiles (i.e. fathers or older youth) for this analysis. The Site Lead team must make the request for the additional analysis to HZA using ***Appendix 28a: Request for Additional Analysis of QSR Results***.

- Upon submitting the completed Request for Additional Analysis of QSR Results, HZA will notify the Site Lead team of the expected date of the additional analysis and then follow up and provide it to the Site Lead team ***(Appendix 28b: QSR Result Highlights)***.

- It should be noted that each County's QSR Final Report will be posted on DHS's website (after the CIP has been developed an accepted).

- To access these reports, Click on the link: http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/searchforprovider/humanservicesproviderdirectory/index.htm#.VnLmUo1Ig5s.
  Go to the Service Code drop down box and click on "County Children and Youth Agencies". Go to the County drop down box and click on the name of the county that you are searching for Click on the button that says, Submit Search. Under the Status and License column, click on "Quality Service Review"

- The QSR Final Report, as well as any QSR Result Highlights and focus group findings should be utilized by the Site Lead team in the preparation for and during the Next Steps Meeting as well as the development of the County Improvement Plan.

- The Local Site Lead team is responsible for sharing/communicating all of the findings/data from the onsite QSR with their County Administrator and the County's management team.

State Site Lead Note: State Site Leads should follow up with their Local Lead partners to ensure that the findings are shared/communicated with the County Administrator and the County's management team to move things forward with the development of the County Improvement Plan.

XIX. Next Steps Meeting

Purpose: The Next Steps Meeting is designed to be an opportunity for the County Agency's efforts to begin/continue their CQI process by developing an action plan for enhancing case practice and system performance. The Next Steps Meeting is the kickoff to the development of the County Improvement Plan (CIP). See Section XX (County Improvement Plan Development) for more information.

- The Site Lead team should work together with the County's management team to plan and develop the materials and presentation for the Next Steps Meeting. This is a county-driven process. A template of a PowerPoint presentation can be found in ***Appendix 30a: PowerPoint Template for Next Steps Meeting*** and ***Appendix 30b: PowerPoint Template for Next Steps Meeting with LIS***. These two resources are provided for the Site Lead team to reference, but the Site Lead team is encouraged to edit the PowerPoint to best meet the needs of the audience.

- There are many formats that a County can choose to consider for the Next Steps Meeting. There are no specific non-negotiables about whom to invite or the format of the meeting as long as the meeting occurs and plans for the next steps of the CQI effort are reviewed. Site Lead teams can speak with CQI Project Managers about suggestions or examples, if desired.

- Examples of potential invitees: QSR Reviewers, County's management team, County Caseworkers and Supervisors, private provider agency directors with QSR cases selected, and key outside stakeholders representing the Courts, advocacy groups, Education, Mental Health, and medical communities.

- Examples of potential length and format: The Next Steps Meeting should ideally occur six to eight weeks following the onsite QSR and is led by the Local Site Leads with the assistance of the State Site Leads. At this meeting (usually about 1-2 hours), the Local and State Site Leads jointly present a brief summary of the findings from the review with an emphasis on what is working well and what areas need improvement at a system level. The majority of this meeting should focus on discussing the recommendations for next steps in working toward an action plan for improving frontline practice and system performance.

XX. County Improvement Plan Development

Purpose: The development of the County Improvement Plan (CIP) should occur utilizing the DAPIM™ framework to help identify the strategies and action steps that a County wants to address within the CIP to help improve their priority outcomes.

The CIP outlines the priorities the County Agency chooses to focus on to improve specific outcomes as a result of a comprehensive review of their practice. This review is not limited to the QSR findings, and may also include a review of additional data such as the County data packages, quantitative measures produced by the County, as well as the results of other qualitative data.

- **CIP Development**

  - The County Agency should be working on a plan to develop their CIP following the onsite QSR. Members of PA's Technical Assistance Collaborative including CWRC's Practice Improvement Specialists and OCYF's Regional Office staff are available as resources.

  - It is suggested that the County apply the DAPIM™ framework for the CIP development process. Information about the DAPIM™ framework can be found in the QSR Protocol (Version 4.0, pages 6 and 7) as well as the American Public Human Services Associations' (APHSA) Organizational Effectiveness Handbook.

  - Continuous improvement efforts rely heavily on strong internal sponsorship to become a way of doing business. Counties should consider the establishment of Sponsor Team and Continuous Improvement Teams if such groups do not already exist.
    - Executive teams often become "Sponsor Teams," who are accountable for defining the high level vision of continuous improvement efforts and securing resources required for success.
    - Continuous Improvement Team(s) is/are the coach and guide of continuous improvement. Members of this team set the direction for and guide continuous improvement work day-to-day. This team has hands-on responsibility for the improvement efforts and maintains ongoing responsibility for monitoring the continuous improvement efforts.
      - Teams should be large enough to represent key internal stakeholders, but small enough to make recommendations and decisions.

  - Members of these teams should be considered content experts, be committed to continuous improvement and a willingness to understand Organizational Effectiveness models (such as APHSA's DAPIM™ framework).
  - Members should have the ability to build trusting relationships (internal and external to the organization).
  - Often times, members of these teams will also charter and oversee the efforts of smaller work teams while also being a communicator to the Sponsor Team about the status of the continuous improvement efforts and provide recommendations to the Sponsor Team based on the monitoring of the continuous improvement efforts.

- Define - Those responsible for defining the County's improvement efforts will be asked to define the desired state and what the organization wants to improve. Defining what a system seeks to improve in operational terms often means engaging key stakeholders in discussion to strategically identify specific and meaningful issues that system partners are interested in improving.

- Assess - The assessment process should include assessment of strengths and gaps in performance capacity, performance actions, outputs and outcomes. It is suggested that existing strengths and gaps be identified (based on information gathered through QSR data, focus group information, and other data sources). This does not require the creation of additional assessments for counties, but rather streamlines existing forms of assessment that will better inform strategic decision-making and planning.

- Bridge to Planning - In order to move from assessment to planning, it is necessary to determine the priority order of identified gaps, root causes of gaps and general remedies to address root causes. ***Appendix 29: Key Questions for Bridge to Planning*** is a resource that can assist in getting to the root cause of safety, permanency, well-being, parent/caregiver functioning and practice performance issues.

- Plan, Implementation and Monitoring - The purpose of the plan is to remind the management team and work team(s) of commitments made, track accountability, and monitor progress. There are essentially three types of continuous improvement planning – quick wins, which can start being identified and implemented as gaps are being identified, mid-term improvement planning, and longer term improvement planning. In writing the actual plan, Counties will be asked to outline the following:

- Strategy: The overall approach/plan to achieve the outcome. Several strategies may be identified for each, but should all connect to the particular outcome you are trying to achieve.
- Action Steps: Clear and specific steps to be taken to achieve the strategy. There may be several action steps identified for each particular strategy.
- Indicators/Benchmarks: These indicate how the strategies and action steps will impact the outcome as well as indicating how progress is measured.
- Evidence of Completion: Evidence that verifies that each individual action step has been completed.
- Persons Responsible: The individual who is responsible for completing each individual action step.
- Timeframe: Expected time of completion for each individual action step. Consider quick wins (completed in 30 days), mid-term improvements (completed in 6 months); and longer-term planning and continuous improvement goals.
- Resources Needed: Resources needed to achieve the strategy or action step. May include, but is not limited to, financial resources, partnerships with technical assistance providers, and staff resources.
- Status: Progress toward completion of each action step upon review of the CIP.
- Monitoring: Although monitoring occurs after implementation, how a plan is to be monitored is actually established during the development of a plan. After the written plan is developed, the continuous improvement team takes increasing ownership of the improvement efforts. Continuous improvement teams should outline how they will monitor progress and communicate monitoring methods to staff and key stakeholders.

- Some additional suggestions of things to consider when developing the CIP include:
    - Do not limit yourself to only using data from your QSR results. Consider other data sources that are available to you.
    - Conduct a root cause analysis of the strengths and gaps identified through the QSR process.
    - Make a connection to the County's Needs Based Plan and Budget.
    - Consider how to sustain the QSR process internally for the purpose of monitoring improvement efforts.

- The CIP template **(*Appendix 31: County Improvement Plan – CIP)*** has been designed to assist the County in thinking about how to plan and implement improvements.

- **CIP Submission and Acceptance**

  - The County is to submit their CIP to the appropriate Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) Regional Office Director and QSR Site Lead team no later than 120 calendar days from the date of the last day of their onsite QSR. If an extension is requested by the County, they are to email the OCYF Regional Office Director, the QSR Site Lead team and CQI Project Managers to explain the reason for the request and the status of the CIP development.

  - The OCYF Regional Office staff will review the County Agency's CIP submission. Following the review of the CIP, the OCYF Regional Office will accept the plan within approximately 10 business days of receipt. The acknowledgment to the County Agency of acceptance of the CIP marks the effective start date of the CIP. The accepted CIP is to be shared with CQI Project Managers.

  - Once the CIP is accepted, the following documents will be posted to the Department of Human Services website:
    - QSR Final Report
    - County Improvement Plan
    - NOTE: If the CIP is updated prior to the County's next state-supported QSR, the updated CIP can and should be provided to CQI Project Managers to ensure the most recent CIP is available online.

State Site Lead Note: During this time, the State Site Leads may need to respond to questions about the findings and format of the CIP. Members for the Technical Assistance Collaborative (i.e. CWRC staff, OCYF Regional Office staff, etc.) can be resources for counties in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the CIP. For example, if a county is working on permanency issues, they might choose to reach out to their partners at SWAN, AOPC, or the ABA.

XXI. Appendices

Purpose: The appendices provide documents and templates that the County and Site Lead Team can and should use throughout the QSR process. Appendices listed in **bold font** in the Table of Contents indicate documents required for use during the QSR process that must be submitted to CQI Project Managers. The CQI Project Managers are available to answer any questions regarding the required submissions.

The current versions of the QSR Manual and all Appendices may be accessed electronically at the CQI webpage (www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CQI.htm).