**Continuous Quality Improvement**

**Quality Service Review**

**Practice Model**

Implementing change at the local level is critical to the achievement of positive child, youth and family outcomes, particularly in a state-supervised and county-administered state. A well-developed **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** process will be a vehicle to drive change forward in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's Continuous Quality Improvement effort is not a time limited project or initiative.

Casey Family Programs and the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement define continuous quality improvement as the complete process of identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and problems and then testing, implementing, learning from, and revising solutions. It relies on an organizational culture that is proactive and supports continuous learning. CQI is firmly grounded in the overall mission, vision, and values of the CCYA. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of staff at all levels of the CCYA, children, youth, families, and stakeholders throughout the process.

Pennsylvania's CQI approach is therefore not another new initiative, but an effort to reshape the system at the local and state level to support the achievement of positive outcomes for our children, youth, and families. We believe that the CQI process that has been developed in Pennsylvania will support staff in improving their practice which will ultimately lead to healthy children, youth, and families.

The **Quality Service Review (QSR)** is one critical component of the CQI process that will be used to assess and monitor progress. The Quality Service Review (QSR) Protocol uses an in-depth case review method and practice appraisal process to find out how children, youth, and families are benefiting from services received and how well locally coordinated services are working for children, youth, and families. The QSR serves as a measure of **Pennsylvania's Practice Model** and standards for child welfare practice. The QSR provides a basis for promoting and strengthening best practice. The QSR Protocol for Examination of Family-Centered Services for Children, Youth, and Families contains qualitative indicators that measure: The current status of the focus child/youth and the child/youth's parents and/or caregivers, and the quality and consistency of core practice principles. QSR findings are used for providing safe, positive feedback to frontline staff, supervisors, and program managers. To be effective, the QSR process should not use the QSR Protocol for the purpose of compliance enforcement, but rather, the QSR Protocol should be used to evaluate case-specific outcomes and practice performance. Feedback from that case-specific review should stimulate and support practice development and capacity-building efforts leading to better practice and results for children, youth, and families receiving services. Pennsylvania’s CQI process is foundationally based on our practice model and standards which define quality practice.

Defining quality practice is a key component in shifting Pennsylvania’s quality improvement efforts away from compliance based requirements. We have learned that if quality practice isn’t defined, it is too easy to fall back into a compliance based way of evaluating practice. Furthermore, we have learned that “true CQI goes beyond basic compliance and focuses on continuous learning about practice and outcomes” (Casey Family Programs, 2005). For quality practice to be internalized and exhibited at the local level, organizations will need to create an environment in which quality practice is supported. All organizational levels within the Child Welfare System, including state, county, and private providers, will need to be committed to improving outcomes for children, youth and families and we must create a system to support this work. Pennsylvania’s efforts to implement a statewide CQI process represents a multi-year effort that is reflected in both the two year PIP and the five year IV-B plan. The development of a coherent, effective CQI process at the state and local level began with the Sustaining Change Workgroup who consulted with key state stakeholders and received technical assistance and support from the Child Welfare Policy and Practice Group (CWPPG), Human Systems and Outcomes (HSO), the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA), and Casey Family Programs to aid in the development of the CQI process, QSR tool, and how best to implement Pennsylvania’s practice model.

Full implementation of CQI will be conducted utilizing a phased-in approach across the Commonwealth over multiple years and implementation began in October 2010. Implementation will be individualized for each county in collaboration with the regional OCYF staff and technical assistance providers/collaborators that support the county.