

# Continuous Quality Improvement

## Description:

This tool provides an outline of the key benefits of continuous quality improvement and a checklist of the key elements.

## How it can be used:

If your health centre is part of a health services accreditation program, then you are familiar with continuous quality improvement and understand the value it provides to your community. If you are not in an accreditation program, committing to and establishing an ongoing process for improving the quality of the health services will be necessary and most valuable.

Use the checklist to assess your health centre and establish a benchmark for future comparison.

A quality program:

- Responds as effectively as possible to the needs of its community;
- Supports the mission and philosophy of the organization or group carrying it out;
- Is sensitive to the needs and culture of the community;
- Models ethical behaviour.

Why is quality important for a community health organization?

1. Quality makes an organization more effective at meeting the needs of the community.
2. Quality adds strength and credibility to the community health system.
3. Quality is always more economical in the long run.
4. Developing a "culture of quality" can have a number of positive effects on the health centre:
  - a. Better staff and volunteer morale;
  - b. Increased pride (by staff, in themselves and the organization);
  - c. Enhanced organizational and individual competence;
  - d. Increased performance levels and improved service delivery.

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ELEMENT	How are we doing? What are we proud of? What can we improve?
<p><b>Client Focus:</b> Your community is the starting point. Community members need to benefit from your health organization's efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the needs to which you are responding?</li> <li>• How can you meet those needs effectively, appropriately, and with respect for the people you serve?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Obsession with Quality:</b> Quality is considered from the very beginning and is built into everything your health organization does.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan carefully, monitor all work, and build in ongoing evaluation and adjustment.</li> <li>• Ensure quality by setting up a system that reduces errors before they happen. Be proactive.</li> <li>• Everyone in the organization understands and adopts this point of view.</li> </ul>	

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ELEMENT	How are we doing? What are we proud of? What can we improve?
<p><b>Continual Improvement of Systems:</b> The work of your organization must be viewed as a process that is never finished.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs are constantly seeking improvement.</li> <li>• Programs and services continually adapt to the needs of the community.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Unity of Purpose:</b> Everyone in your health organization works together toward common goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is support throughout the organization, with no turf battles, jealousy, or unnecessary competition.</li> <li>• Interactions among people are mutually helpful and aimed at achieving the best possible performance of your health organization.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Teamwork:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People make strong connections with their colleagues which shows in excellent results.</li> <li>• Teamwork removes performance pressure from individuals and results in better performance from everyone.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Employee Involvement:</b> Everyone in your health organization is committed to quality services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff members have the ability to contribute to the achievement of high quality services.</li> <li>• People have enough control over their own jobs to do them effectively</li> <li>• All opinions and ideas are respected and taken seriously.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Education and Training:</b> Achieving quality requires constant learning for everyone in your health organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning is part of the organizational culture.</li> <li>• Staff members learn from others and are encouraged to take courses, attend training, and visit other organizations to continually get new ideas and perspectives.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Scientific Approach:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your health organization uses the best research available, as well as the experience of others, to construct an effective program or initiative.</li> <li>• Priorities and programs are not based on intuition or political influences.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Long-Term Commitment:</b> The best work in the world is only useful if it is maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality is considered a long-term concept.</li> <li>• Your organization keeps striving for improvement, even after achieving an acceptable level of performance. "Acceptable" is never good enough.</li> <li>• Your health organization is constantly seeking to be "the best that it can possibly be."</li> </ul>	