

## Tips for Building Will in CQI for LIA Supervisors

Introducing and establishing a culture of CQI to your team can be challenging. It is critical for leadership to build will among team members early and continue to maintain engagement in the CQI process for sustained improvement. Challenges around building will appear in a myriad of ways, and the strategies to combat these issues will vary. This document outlines helpful tips for successful will building in CQI from LIA supervisors and home visitors who participated in past CollINs as well as various experts from the CQI and home visiting fields. They provide guidance on how to manage workloads, maintain excitement for CQI on the front lines, what kinds of support to ask for from state leads, and more.

### Tip #1: Always return to the vision.

Remind team members of the positive impact the work at hand will have on families. By ensuring that improvements are aimed at increasing the value provided to clients who receive home visiting services, it helps to tap into the core values that inspired team members to work in home visiting in the first place, to foster a sense of shared purpose, and to remind staff that the CQI work is critical to the team's mission and their individual vocation.

The most consistent lesson I have learned over time is that frontline staff deserve to remain connected to the stories of those their work affects both through participation of those with lived experience in the improvement work and through shared story-telling.

- Kelly McCutcheon Adams, LICSW, Senior Director,  
Institute for Healthcare Improvement

It can feel frustrating – our calling is to be home visitors first and foremost. We have so many trainings that take us out of the field. We want to work at the ground level. If we don't see families how can we help them? The goal is to not be negative and remember that the end goal is still helping families.

- Susan Martinez, Public Health Nurse, Oakland County  
Health Department

### Tip #2: Make CQI a priority.

Provide structure by carving out time consistently to work on CQI projects together. Having regularly scheduled meetings on the calendar makes CQI a priority and provides a time where everyone can come together to share wins and ask questions. These meetings should provide opportunities to maintain open communications, consistently reinforce the end goal, and remind teams of the bigger picture: improving outcomes for families.

Many of our local implementing leads in Michigan invest time and energy in CQI, they foster open communication and sharing, they don't hide from problems—they bring them to the surface and talk about them—they make sure there's time set aside for [CQI], they talk about it as a priority, they share successes when they see them . . . There're so many things that really strong CQI leaders can do to make it really work. It doesn't work without that kind of support and leadership.

- Julia Heany, Program Director, Center for Healthy Communication, Michigan Public Health Institute

### Tip #3: Find a CQI champion home visitor.

You likely have someone on your team who is extremely excited about CQI or already has some experience with CQI.

Bringing home visitors to the HV CoIIN in-person meetings was a game changer. They connected with other home visitors on a national level and became CQI champions for their peers.

- Sally Baggett, Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

We've had lots of turnover over the years and often bring on new team members that don't have CQI experience. Those who do have experience are looked at as the innovative leaders and help new staff with CQI work. It helps to have other home visitors clarify the work to the new team members.

- Susan Martinez, Public Health Nurse, Oakland County Health Department

### Tip #4: Be patient and provide a different perspective.

For many, CQI is a new concept and there may be a learning curve in the beginning. It's important to be realistic about expectations and the time it will take for team members to feel comfortable with data and implementing tests of change. Be consistent and build CQI into all aspects of work (e.g., add CQI language into job descriptions, amend agency policy and procedures, etc.). Remember to validate team members feelings when they say this feels like more work. Remind them that improvement work is not just extra work, it's doing the work better. There may be growing pains at first, but CQI will reduce waste and improve processes in the future. In organizations with strong CQI culture, over time, every employee at every level thinks that they have 2 parts to their job: doing the work well, and learning how to do the work better<sup>1</sup>.

Try maintaining a continuous improvement culture in everything you do. Let this concept of improvement become the way that you do things every day. It has to become a habit. If it's just this month's flavor, it won't be something that you do regularly and may well end up being a lot of sizzle and no substance.

- Marcy Raska, HV-CoIIN 2.0 LIA Mentor and Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

### Tip #5: Foster a sense of ownership.

Emphasize the role each home visitor has in making meaningful contributions to testing and implementing change. Promote a culture of shared decision-making and show a willingness to negotiate and compromise. There are many ways to do this: rotate roles at CQI meetings; when there are opportunities to present the team's work, include people who might not typically have that role and opportunity; celebrate contributions regularly and ensure that all team members recognize and are recognized; etc.

There is real value sharing the leadership role with home visitors. It's an opportunity to build capacity on the front lines and create a sense of ownership in the CQI process. For example, have home visitors lead CQI team meetings or present their improvements to external organizations or at CQI or home visiting conferences.

- Kelly McCutcheon Adams, LICSW, Senior Director, Institute for Healthcare Improvement

Always asking for feedback from staff. Asking them – not telling them – helps them stay invested. Especially when we start new cycles, we want their feedback, not just what we decided.

- Susan Martinez, Public Health Nurse, Oakland County Health Department

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ihl.org/resources/Pages/Tools/QI-Project-Management.aspx>

#### **Tip #6: Set clear expectations and communicate effectively.**

It is important to clarify team members' roles and responsibilities through dialogue and documentation. Try establishing ground rules like how your team will communicate and expected response times. Draft your team norms as a group and revisit often. Make sure meetings are structured so team members know what to expect and can easily see opportunities to contribute and participate. Holding quick, frequent "huddles" (e.g., 10 minutes, standing up) is a great way to review key action items and next steps without taking up too much time. Identify clear start and end dates for CQI projects and state explicitly when teams can expect the work to be heaviest and when there may be more room to breathe (e.g., between CQI projects, in planning phases). As much as possible, synchronize this so they do not overlap with busiest times with other program obligations (e.g., national benchmark reporting, model recredentialing, etc.).

We found that transparency is key. When you're open and honest about the process, people are more receptive and invested in the work. It also helps them see how CQI is directly tied to their work.

- Monica Marchell, Healthy Families Supervisor, Healthy Families Kent, Muskegon, Oceana & Mason Counties

#### **Tip #7: Reach out to your state leads.**

State leadership commitment to CQI is key. It's important to ask your state leads for what you need to be successful. For example, creating opportunities to dialogue with other LIAs in-person or virtually, changing line items in your budget, providing and facilitating access to consistent CQI technical assistance, etc.

State leaders help local folks understand why CQI is so important. They communicate where MIECHV is, where we want to improve and where other states are. It's another reminder that this is not just another task.

- Sally Baggett, Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

#### **Tip #8: Celebrate wins, no matter how small.**

Celebrating wins at any level is a great way to maintain excitement for CQI work. You can recognize achievements through special acknowledgments at meetings, creating awards like "PDSA Champion of the Month", or highlighting successes in newsletters.

When our team accomplished results, we celebrated with awards, food shared by all, a group lunch, and most importantly, a case presentation by a home visitor during a team meeting on how the cycle was going. This kept the motivation high and served as positive reinforcement to continue with the improvement work.

- Marcy Raska, HV-CollN 2.0 LIA Mentor and Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

#### **Tip #9: Set the tone: All teach. All learn.**

Create a safe space for home visitors to ask questions and encourage everyone to give feedback often. No idea should be left unspoken. As a supervisor, make sure to solicit ideas from staff, validate when they want to do tests of change and have them report back on successes, and especially on failure and learning.

It's important to know your staff well. Not all home visitors will speak up in meetings, but when asked for feedback in one-on-one supervision, the quiet home visitors provide incredible insight. It's important to allow everyone to feel heard in their own way.

- Alyce Hernandez, Program Manager, Healthy Families Kent, Muskegon, Oceana & Mason Counties

### Tip #10: Encourage failing forward.

Remind teams it's not about always doing it right, it's just about doing it. Emphasize how failure helps drive learning. Call attention to the times where teams or individuals tried many small tests of change and highlight how these small tests drive learning whether or not they succeed or fail. Remind teams that failure is a helpful part of this process and not every test of change is expected to work.

Fear of failure or wanting to spend lots of time creating the perfect PDSA before testing can slow progress and innovation. It can be tempting to spend a couple months creating the perfect PDSA, but in those two months, you could have run many tests that actually led to more significant outcomes.

- Kelly McCutcheon Adams, LICSW, Senior Director, Institute for Healthcare Improvement

### Tip #11: Use data often.

Monthly reporting may feel burdensome, but consistent reporting allows staff to understand the value of the data and see the effects of the changes. Run charts can be a powerful visual reminder of improvements. Showing data visually at every meeting can be a great way to build and maintain excitement for CQI.

When you start to see results. It doesn't feel like extra work anymore. It makes it easy.

- Monica Marchell, Healthy Families Supervisor, Healthy Families Kent, Muskegon, Oceana & Mason Counties

We started sharing data on a regular basis during CQI team meetings. We shared the results and run charts at meetings to update progress. They were great visual reminders for our team and it changed how we thought of the data collection process.

- Marcy Raska, HV-CollN 2.0 LIA Mentor and Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

### Tip #12: Make it fun!

Find ways to make your CQI meetings more engaging and enjoyable. Anything from providing snacks when possible, to asking home visitors to plan icebreakers, or team building activities at the start of meetings can help engage your team.

We like to start off our meetings with a funny picture. It gets us all laughing together, which is a nice way to start the meeting.

- Sally Baggett, Sr. Training and Technical Assistance Specialist, HV ImpACT

### Additional Resources:

- NICHQ's [Strategies for Effective Leadership in Health Improvement Efforts](#): This blog post outlines three key strategies for effective leadership and driving change within your improvement network
- JBA's [Continuous Quality Improvement Toolkit](#): A Resource for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Awardees, Module 3: Creating the CQI Culture and Forming a Team.
- IHI's [Psychology of Change Framework](#) is a guide for all leaders interested in understanding the underlying psychology of change and leveraging its power to impact quality improvement efforts.
- IHI's [QI Project Management](#): This tool describes strategies to effectively manage quality improvement projects, specific ideas to try within each strategy, and offers a workspace for you to note your next steps to implement the strategy.