

Practice Matters

Quality Assurance and Improvement

Colorado's Administrative Review Division (ARD) serves as an independent third-party review system under the auspices of the Colorado Department of Human Services. The ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and a portion of the Quality Assurance System for the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) and the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC).

This newsletter is a joint project between Denver County Department of Human Services (DDHS), the DCW and the ARD. The co-authors are:

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Applying a Continuous Quality Improvement Framework in Colorado

A Collaborative Effort Between
County Departments,
the Division of Child Welfare and
the Administrative Review Division

Continuous Quality Improvement

Did you get into child welfare/human services for the money? Or was it to do work that is meaningful and makes a positive difference in peoples' lives (while paying your bills)? The Administrative Review Division (ARD) and the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) also want to do work that is meaningful and makes a positive difference in peoples' lives.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) offers a method to assess processes and outcomes. This article provides some background information on CQI principles, the application of CQI in Colorado's child welfare system and an example of implementation. The ARD and the DCW utilize CQI to support counties in improving practice and assessing the impact on outcomes for Colorado's children and families.

CQI: Key Principles

In February 2005, Casey Family Programs and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement convened a group of national child welfare CQI experts to determine how CQI could be applied to child welfare processes and move beyond measuring only compliance.

The CQI framework created in 2005 includes the following key principles:

- Child welfare staff are committed to better outcomes for the children and families they serve. CQI requires consistent support from all levels within the agency.
- All processes can be improved, even if they are working well.
- Learning is continuous.
- Involvement of children, youth, families, stakeholders and staff is crucial in all phases of implementation.
- Successful implementation requires the provision of training, preparation and support.
- Quantitative and qualitative data should be gathered through formal and informal processes. Qualitative data brings in the "stories behind the data" and provides recommendations for improvement based on those stories.
- Data analysis should identify trends; it supports decision-making and provides a method to evaluate progress.¹



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Applying CQI to Child Welfare in Colorado

Colorado has implemented various methods of child welfare practice with the goal of improving outcomes. Some of the methods that have been utilized include county designed teams to monitor and advise practice, Team Decision Meetings/Family Group Conferencing, treatment court processes (i.e., drug court) and, more recently, Family Assessment Response and Colorado's Practice Initiative. By partnering on such initiatives, the counties, the DCW and the ARD can collect and analyze data, identify trends and assess the impact of the initiatives on the counties' desired outcomes.

The ARD works diligently (with the DCW, counties and stakeholders) to assess whether the state processes, as implemented at the county level, are achieving the desired outcomes. The ARD out-of-home review data is reported quarterly. Upon the completion of each assessment and in-home review, the ARD facilitates a meeting with the county to share the data from all reviewed populations. The county is provided a narrative report which contains a recommendations section. Counties can request to collaborate with the ARD to implement the CQI framework to address these ideas or other county desired outcomes.²

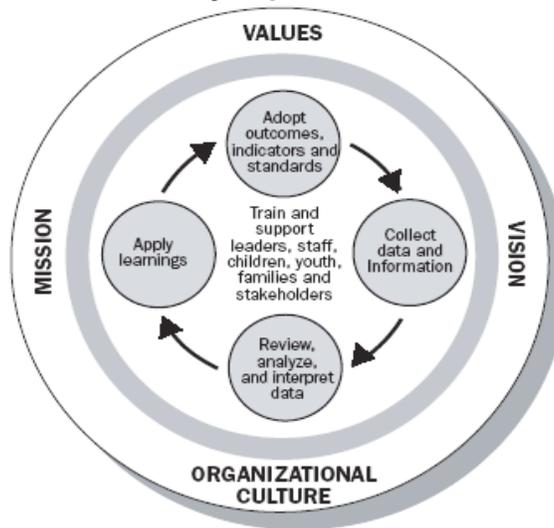
CQI: Denver County Implementation

Statewide, the ARD Assessment Reviews have identified issues with the accurate and consistent use of the Colorado Safety and Risk Assessments. Denver County identified similar concerns

following the ARD Assessment Review in that county in November 2010. The DCW has been offering hands-on, tutorial assistance and training on the use of these tools. In addition, Denver County is participating in the Colorado Practice Initiative (CPI) to develop a "clear, consistent and cohesive approach to practice and service delivery" with the goal of improving child and family outcomes.³ As the direct service entity, Denver County requested the assistance of the DCW to strengthen the effectiveness of their staff. The DCW provides coaching and technical assistance to child protection caseworkers, supervisors and administrators statewide. The ARD

supports counties and the DCW by collecting and analyzing qualitative data to assess state processes as implemented in county practice. By applying the CQI framework and key principles, the subsections below illustrate the benefit of this collaborative partnership.

Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement



Collect Data and Information

Several systems exist from which data regarding Colorado's children can be gathered. The *National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System* gathers statistics about abuse and neglect, including referrals, investigations, victims, perpetrators and case level data. The *Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System* contains case level data regarding children in foster care placement and children who are adopted through public child welfare agencies. The federal government also gathers data through the Child and Family Services Review, which most recently

occurred in Colorado in 2009. Colorado's statewide automated child welfare information system (Trails) is a case management system capable of producing reports specific to Colorado's children. Counties have also designed county specific systems from which data reports can be gathered.

The ARD gathers data statewide regarding Colorado's screened out referrals, assessments, in-home cases and out-of-home cases. One benefit of ARD data/narrative reports is that they provide qualitative information about the experiences of those involved in the child welfare system.

Review, Analyze and Interpret Data

Upon the completion of an assessment and in-home review, the ARD compiles the data and facilitates a meeting with the county to review the findings. Data is provided to the county in a narrative format and there is a discussion about county strengths (above 90% compliance) and areas for improvement (below 70% compliance). The ARD is available to assist counties in assessing the impact of interventions on desired outcomes that the county identifies. ARD qualitative data for Denver County indicated that performance was below the threshold of 70% in accurate use of the safety assessment, documentation of required content in the safety assessment, accurate use of the safety plan and accurate use of the risk assessment.

Apply Learnings

Based on the ARD data, Denver County partnered with the DCW to improve outcomes related to child safety. Initially, DCW staff met with Denver County's intake administrator and supervisors to thoroughly review the safety and risk assessment tools. Trainings facilitated by DCW staff were subsequently scheduled with each intake unit. Following the trainings, the DCW provided a County Consultation Summary Report to Denver

County summarizing the efforts of the partnered agencies. The DCW stated in the report that they will participate in the next ARD assessment and in-home review for the purpose of assessing whether any additional assistance is needed, specific to the Colorado Safety and Risk Assessments.

Adopt Outcomes, Indicators and Standards

The county must identify a goal or outcome against which the impact of an intervention will be assessed. In this case, Denver County's identified outcome is improved safety for children. Denver County created a standard that all intake staff would receive the training from the DCW. One indicator that progress toward the goal was made is that after receiving the training, intake staff reported that they have a better understanding of the assessment tools and will be able to more accurately assess and document safety and risk factors of families. Another indicator of progress toward the desired outcome is the ARD data assessing the accurate use of the safety assessment at the next assessment review, scheduled to occur in May 2011. (It is important to note that the DCW trainings occurred midway through the next ARD assessment review period. Therefore, it may be more appropriate and realistic to anticipate incremental improvements in subsequent ARD assessment reviews.)

Collect Data and Information

Quantitative data reviewed in Trails and qualitative data gathered by the ARD reviewers will measure the impact of the training by assessing Denver County's use of the safety assessment. As part of their commitment to this partnership, DCW staff will participate in the review and will provide additional assistance as needed.

Review, Analyze and Interpret Data

The ARD will share its data and analysis with Denver County during a meeting scheduled to occur on June 23, 2011.

Data analysis supports decision-making and provides a method to evaluate progress.

The ARD collects and analyzes qualitative data to assess state processes as implemented in county practice.

ARD CQI Logic Model

Issue Statement: Intake staff are not accurately and consistently using the Colorado Risk and Safety Assessments.

DESIRED OUTCOME	ACTION STEPS AND STRATEGIES	DATA COLLECTED	INDICATORS	DATE INDICATOR ACHIEVED
Increased accuracy and consistency in the use of the Colorado Risk and Safety Assessments will improve safety for children.	Denver County child welfare intake administrators, supervisors, and caseworkers will receive training and support regarding the Colorado Risk and Safety Assessments.	Date trainings were provided.	All staff were trained.	1/19/11 2/9/11 2/17/11 2/24/11 3/8/11
		Feedback regarding increased knowledge of accurate use of Colorado Risk and Safety Assessments.	Staff report that after training they have a better understanding of the assessment tools and will be able to more accurately assess and document safety and risk factors of families.	1/19/11 2/9/11 2/17/11 2/24/11 3/8/11
	ARD will conduct a follow up assessment review.	ARD assessment data.	Improved assessments as measured by ARD assessment review.	<i>Currently scheduled for 5/23/11-5/24/11.</i>

How to Participate in CQI in Colorado:

- Identify one or more desired outcomes.
- The ARD can assess your county's baseline related to the identified outcomes and its indicators.
- The DCW can provide training and technical assistance to your county's identified audience.
- The ARD can gather and analyze data as well as provide feedback regarding goal achievement, strengths and areas for improvement.



If you are interested in the ARD's assistance with applying the CQI model in your county, please contact the Administrative Review Division at (303) 866-7160.

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Upcoming issues of Practice Matters:
Family Services Plan 3A (Treatment Plan)
ARD Myths and Facts

References:

^{1,2}Watson, Peter and Agosti, Jen. [A Framework for Implementing Continuous Quality Improvement](#), National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement, 2005.

³Colorado's Practice Initiative www.cdhs.state.co.us/childwelfare/cpi.htm.

[National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement Fact Sheet](#), Quality Improvement Systems for Child Welfare Agencies, University of Southern Maine, Muskie School of Public Service.

Franklin, Skip, Savage, Susan, Collins, Christy, and Ingram, Daryl. [Supervisory Case Reviews: Tools to Monitor and Improve Practice](#), 2007.