

***The Secret Ingredients of
Continuous Quality Improvement:
Building Sustainable Organizational Change***

Presented by

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WASHINGTON COUNCIL
FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) - Agenda:

- Introductions: Who we are?
- CQI – Brief Review
- Human and Organizational Aspects of CQI
- 5 Secret Ingredients of CQI
- Resources



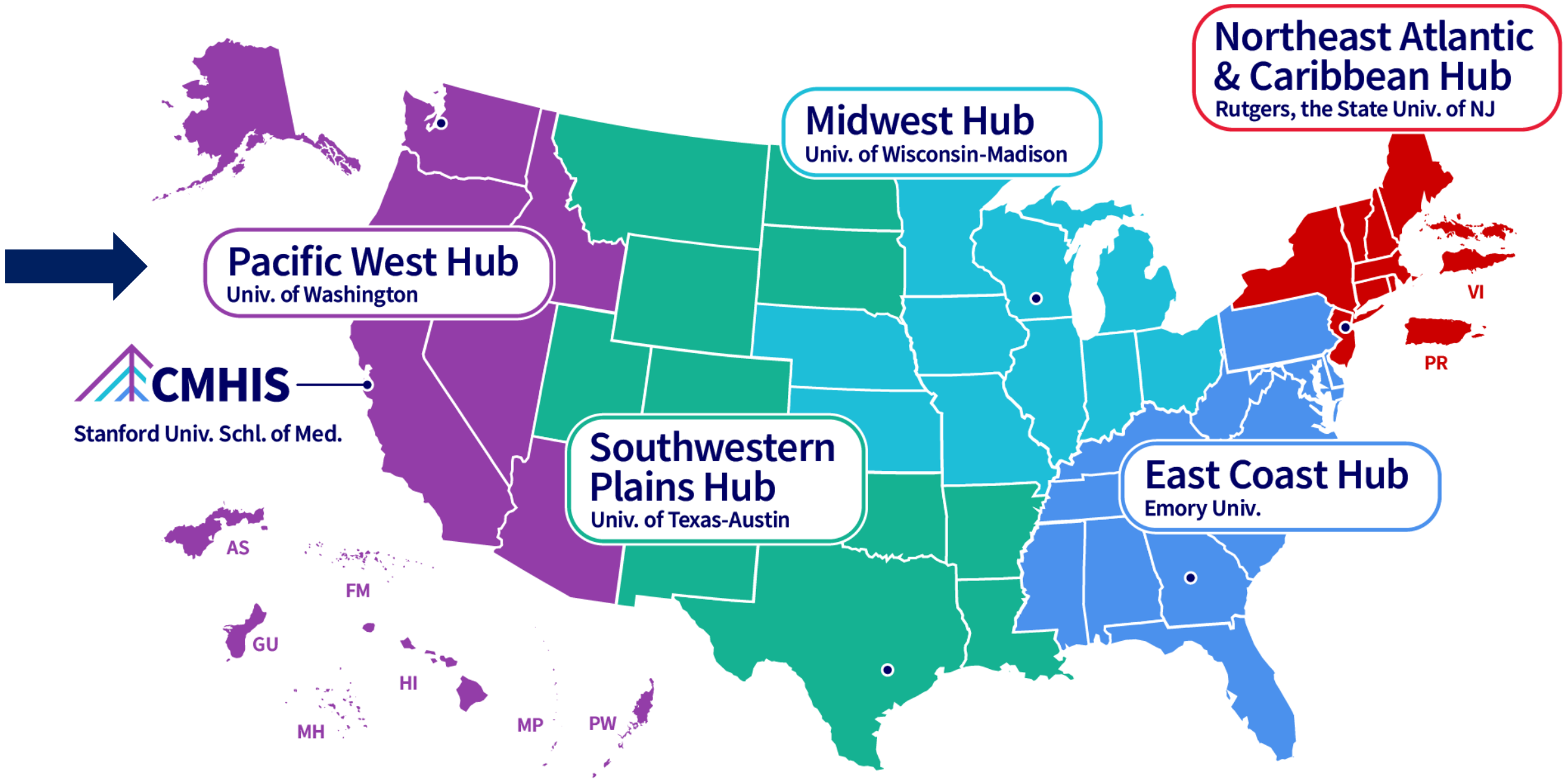
CMHIS provides support for organizations and systems on how to implement the most effective mental health care in their communities.



Preparing

Implementing

Sustaining



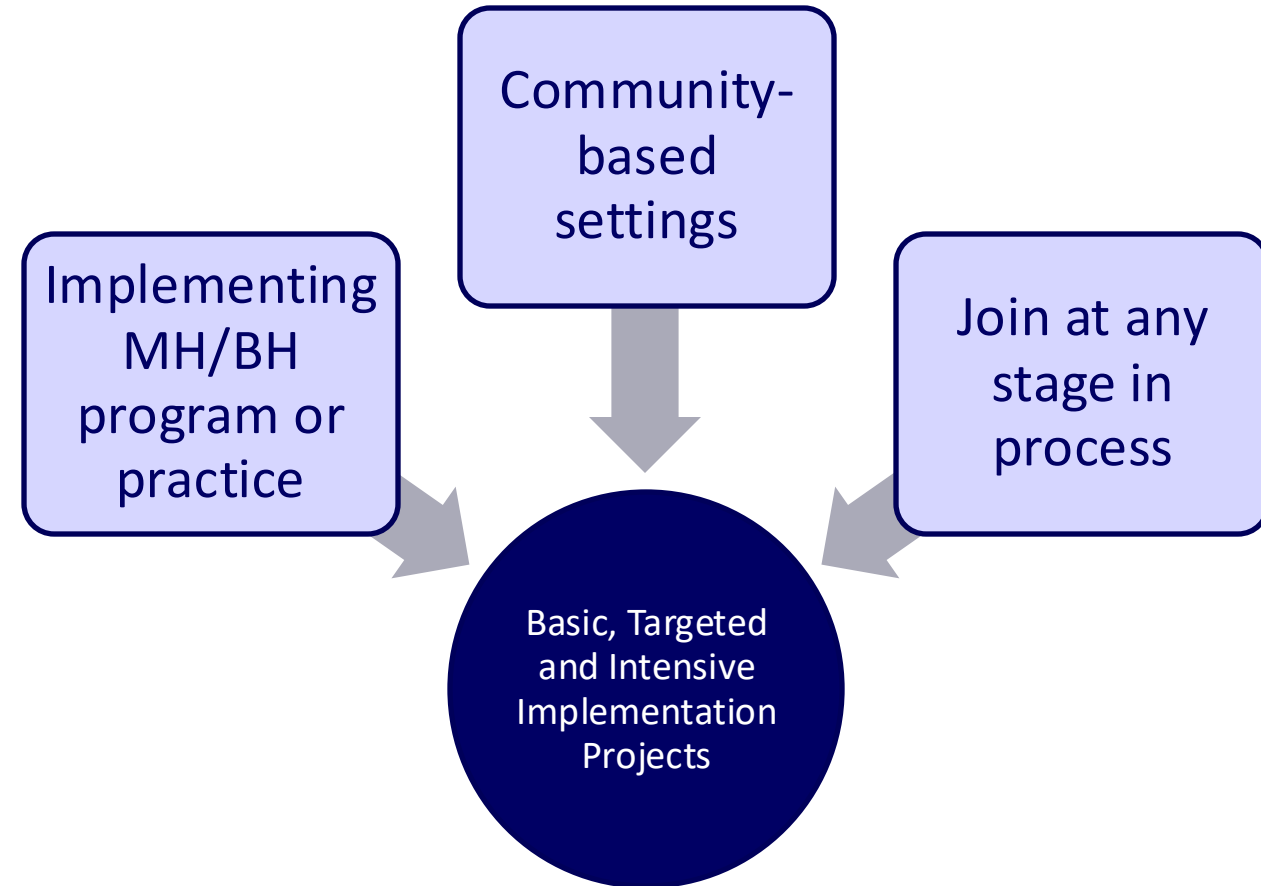


Co-directors

Lydia Chwastiak, MD, MPH
Christina Clayton, LICSW, SUDP



- Serves HHS regions 9 & 10
- Housed at University of Washington School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
- Extensive public behavioral health, research, and clinical experience



What is Implementation Science?

The study of processes and factors related to successful integration of effective practices within a particular setting:

- *How to **get effective practices into routine settings** so more people can receive the best care*
- *How to **maintain the success of practices and programs***



Elements of Implementing Program & Practice Change



Engaging the community and assessing their mental health needs

Identifying factors that influence implementation

Deciding what support is needed to implement the new practice

Using clinical progress to guide treatment

Marketing programs and services

Using data to improve service delivery

Evaluating program outcomes

Sustaining service delivery



The work of CMHIS and the Hubs



Events & Activities

Targeted/intensive events focused on real-world practice change.



Consultation & Coaching

Hands-on, tailored problem-solving to help your team navigate roadblocks.



Resources

Practical tools and guides to get started, improve quality, and sustain services.



Online Learning

Experts at your fingertips through online courses and recorded sessions in our CMHIS Learning Lab.

Implementation Scenarios



Additional Pressures



Session Learning Objectives:



IDENTIFY & RECOGNIZE

- Key Ingredients for CQI
- Leadership Behaviors
- Thrive Sustainably



OPERATIONALIZE

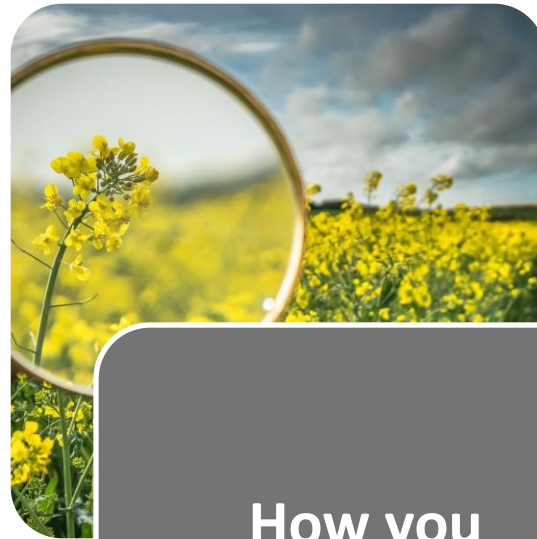
- Strategies for Change
- Effective Practices
- Data Decision-Making



ACCESS & ENGAGE

- Peer Learning
- Resources and tools
- Future opportunities


In Other Words...



**Effective practice
change has a
roadmap**

**How you
approach change
matters**

**Tools, resources
& supports can
help**

The slide features a dark blue background with a decorative border at the top and bottom. The border consists of a repeating zigzag pattern of lines in shades of purple, blue, and teal. In the center, a white rectangular box contains the main text.

Continuous Quality Improvement: Brief Introduction

What is **Continuous** Quality Improvement?

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a *structured* approach to quality that uses data to improve organizational systems, *processes*, service delivery, and outcomes.

It is a form of process improvement where an individual or team

- *sets a goal for improvement*
- *enacts a change*
- *measures the effect of the change, and*
- *repeats this process until the goal is met.*

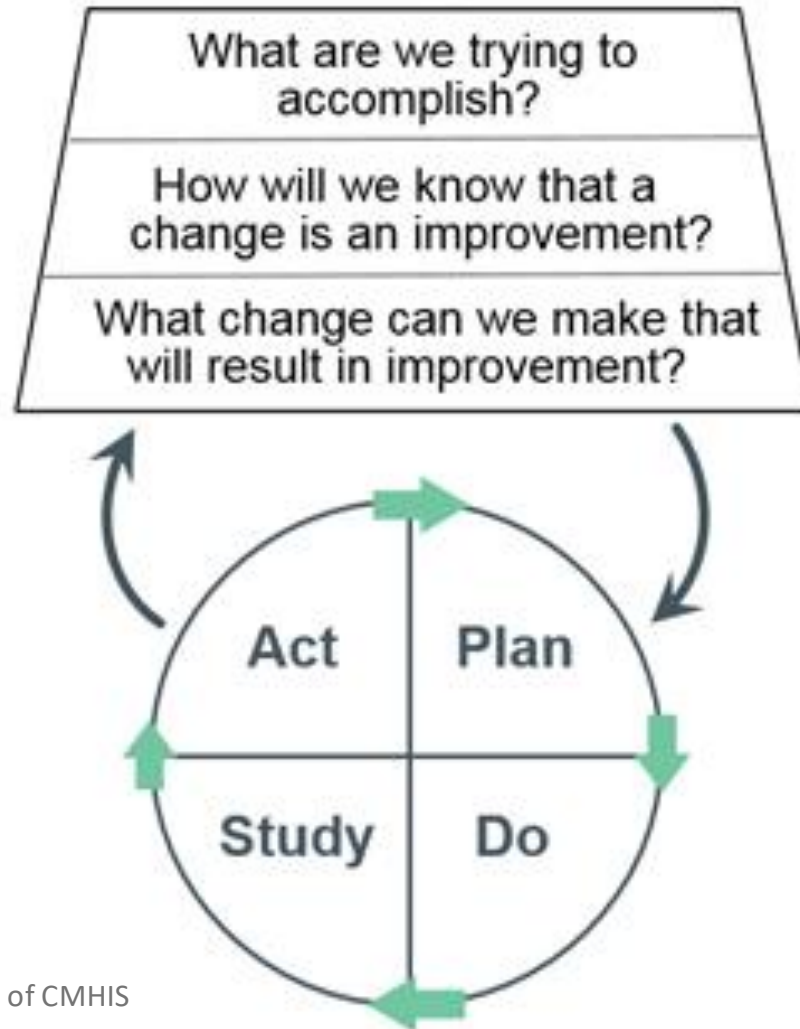


Quality Improvement is a Journey...



- Identify your destination
- Track where you are going
- Try some strategies to get there

Starts with Three Questions



[Model for Improvement | Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#)

NIATx Model (10-Steps)

1. Create a Change Team
2. Review the NIATx Principles and Define your Big Aim
3. Define your Focused Aim
4. Develop your Aim Statement and Data Plan
5. Do a Walk Through
6. Draw a Flow Chart
7. Do a Nominal Group Technique
8. Plan a Change Strategy
9. Do PDSA Cycles until you reach your Aim
10. Complete the Change Project



The Most Important Thing



Research has shown that there is not one CQI model that is more effective than any other model (e.g. Six Sigma, LEAN, NIATx, IHI)....

The important thing is to choose and use a model to guide your CQI efforts.

Using CQI to Improve Delivery Processes



Share Your CQI Experience



What experiences have you had with CQI?

What makes it challenging to do well?



Five Secret Ingredients of CQI



Over 70% of Change Initiatives Fail: *Why?*

① Organizational Level



- Unclear priorities from management
- Conflicting messages
- Poorly defined objectives

② Individual Staff Level

- Status quo bias
- Loss Aversion
- Disrupting Operations



What can you do?
Use an *intentional, structured* approach to change.

The Human Side of Change



Improvement efforts often fail not because the technical solution is wrong, but because leaders neglect the human side of change

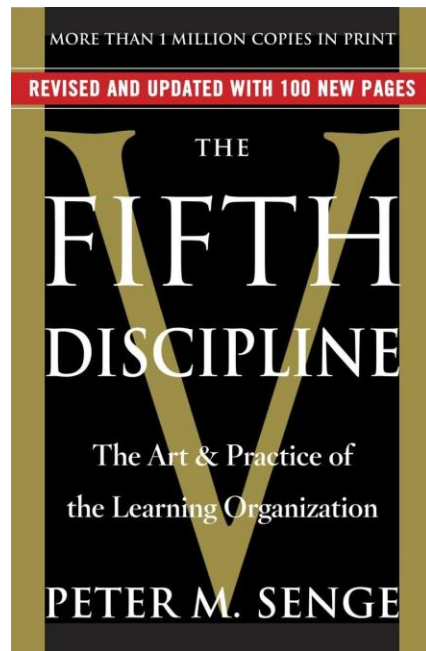
- People's motivation
- Relationships
- Willingness to adopt new behaviors

“People don't resist change they resist being changed.”

Five Secret Ingredients of CQI



1. Leadership – creating a learning organization
2. Team-led CQI efforts
3. Effective use of data
4. Apply a system's change lens
5. Customer Focus



Leadership

Creating a Learning Organization

“We don’t have staff buy-in”

“ We label it resistance and invent strategies to overcome it. But we would do far better if we changed the story and learned how to invoke the resident creativity of our organization. We need to work with these insistent creative forces, or they will be provoked to work against us.”



"Finding Our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time" **Margaret Wheatly**



Team Led CQI

Who do we need to achieve this goal?

Step 1: Create a Change Team



- 1. *Change Team*
- 2. *Big Aim*
- 3. *Focused Aim*
- 4. *Aim Statement/
Data Plan*
- 5. *Walk Through*
- 6. *Flow Chart*
- 7. *NGT*
- 8. *Change Strategy*
- 9. *PDSA*
- 10. *Complete Project*



Key Points

- Strong Change Leader
- Provide CQI training to the team
- Members with diverse experience
- Allocate time for the change team
- Incentivize members
- Change Team Identifies Strategies
- Celebrate Successes





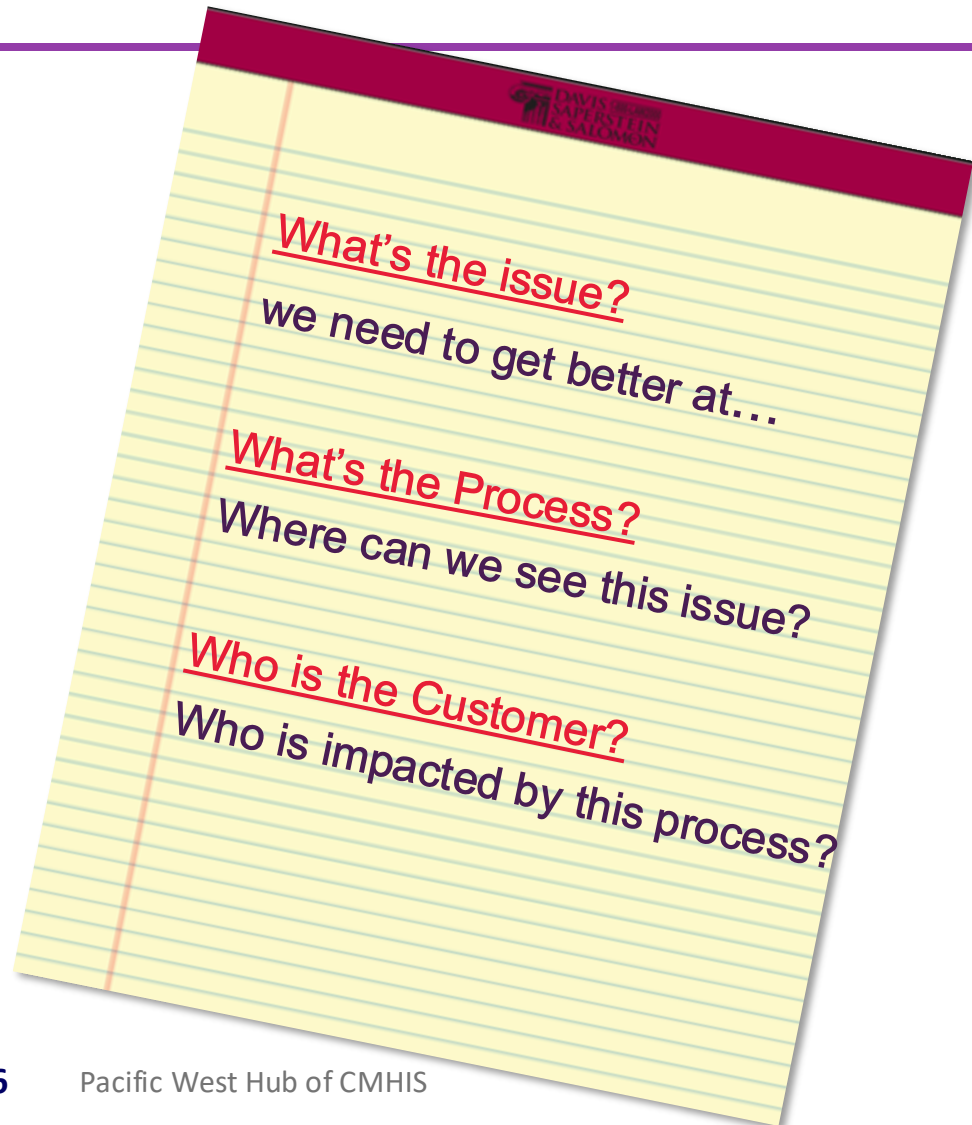
Using Data Effectively

Step 2: The Big Aim



- 1. Change Team
- 2. Big Aim
- 3. Focused Aim
- 4. Aim Statement/
Data Plan
- 5. Walk Through
- 6. Flow Chart
- 7. NGT
- 8. Change Strategy
- 9. PDSA
- 10. Complete Project

What is your Big Aim? What do you want to improve?



Practice – Interactive Activity

Step 2: The Big Aim

- Break out session dialogue on the 3 questions.
- Find a partner or join your team if they are here
- Each person creates and shares a simple Big Aim sentence:
 - Our **Big** issue....
 - can be seen in **Process**
 - with **Customers**

10-Minute Activity



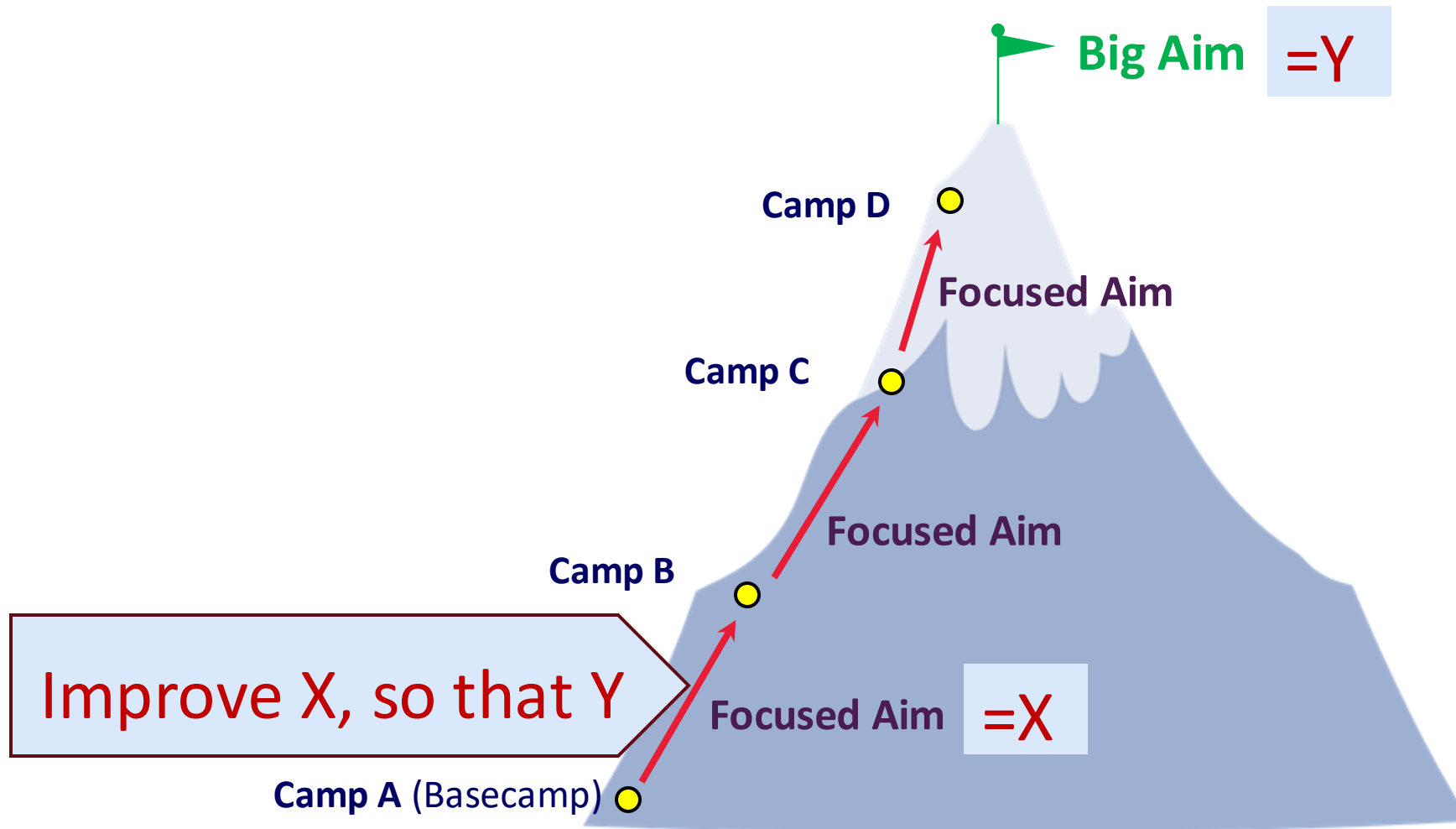
IN ACTION!

Step 3: The Focused Aim



- 1. Change Team
- 2. Big Aim
- 3. Focused Aim
- 4. Aim Statement/
Data Plan
- 5. Walk Through
- 6. Flow Chart
- 7. NGT
- 8. Change Strategy
- 9. PDSA
- 10. Complete Project

Big Aim to Focused Aim

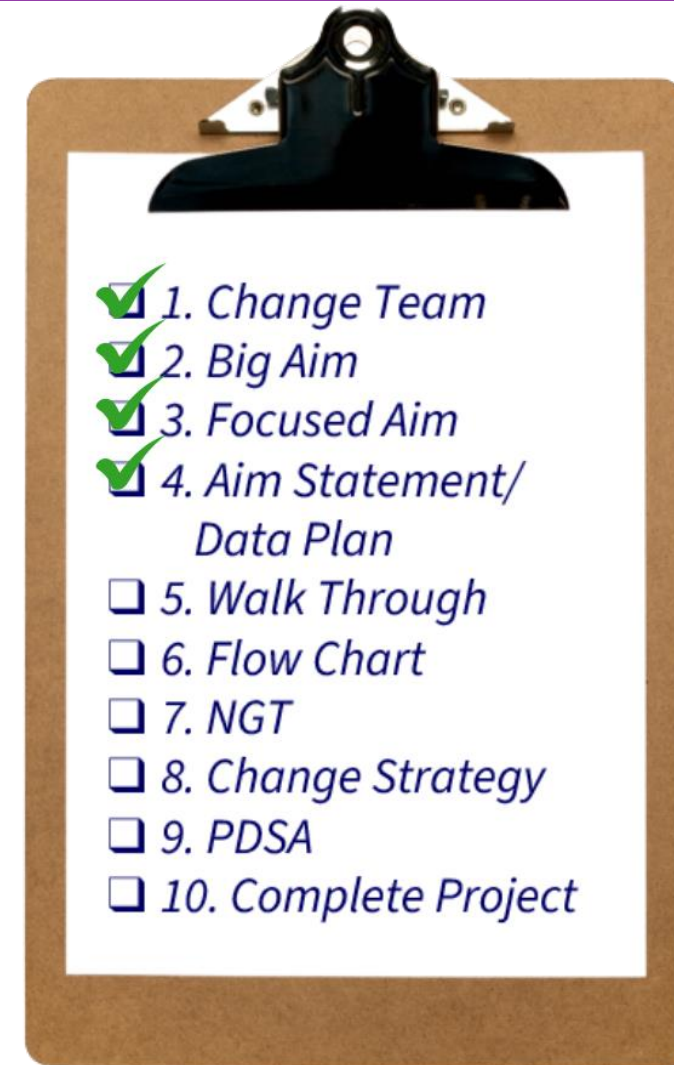


Step 3: Key Points

- A step toward the Big Aim
- Specific measurable goal that we can explore through the walk through and flow chart
- Improve X so that Y
- *Example: We want to improve our show rates so that people receive services and our organization generates sufficient revenue.*



Step 4: Aim Statement & Data Plan



The Aim Statement Components



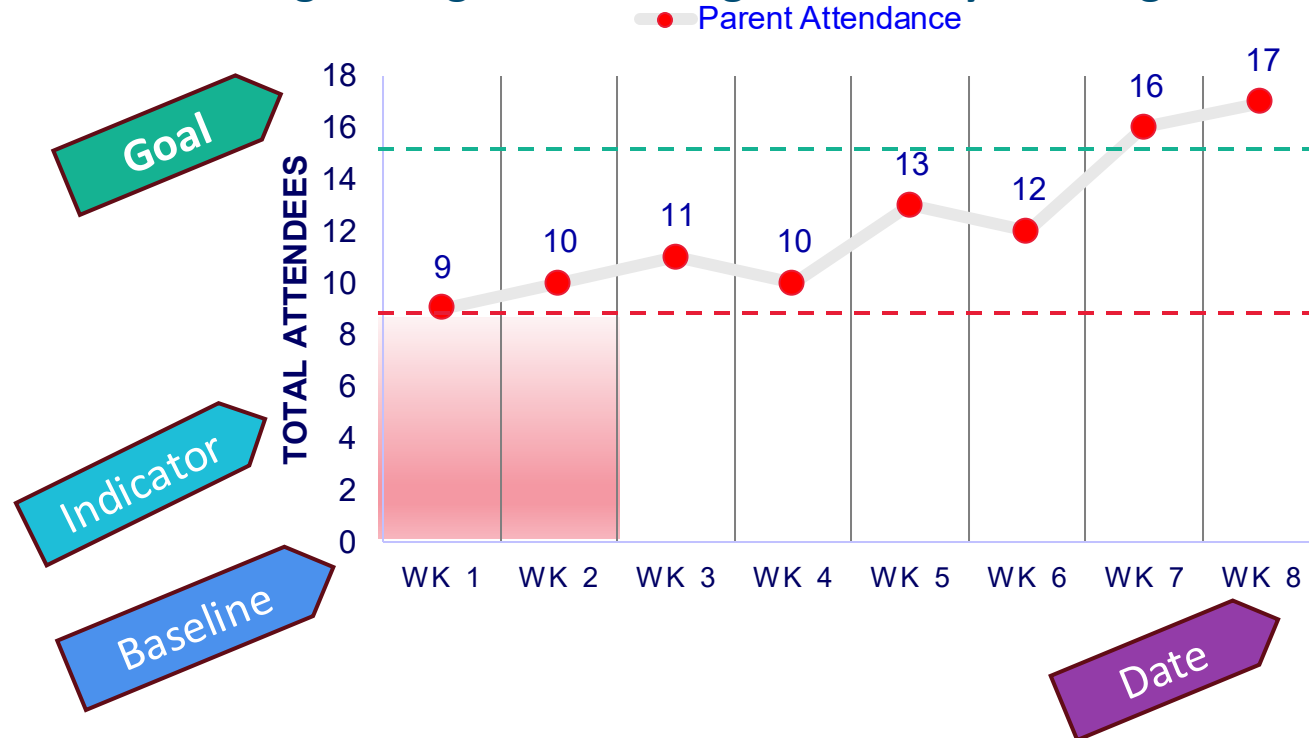
- **Data Indicator:** What proxy measure are we using to measure our progress?
- **Baseline:** What is the indicator level before we start the change?
- **Goal:** How much progress do we hope to achieve?
- **Date:** How long will we run the change project?

The Aim Statement equation: Improve **I** from **B** to **G** by **D**

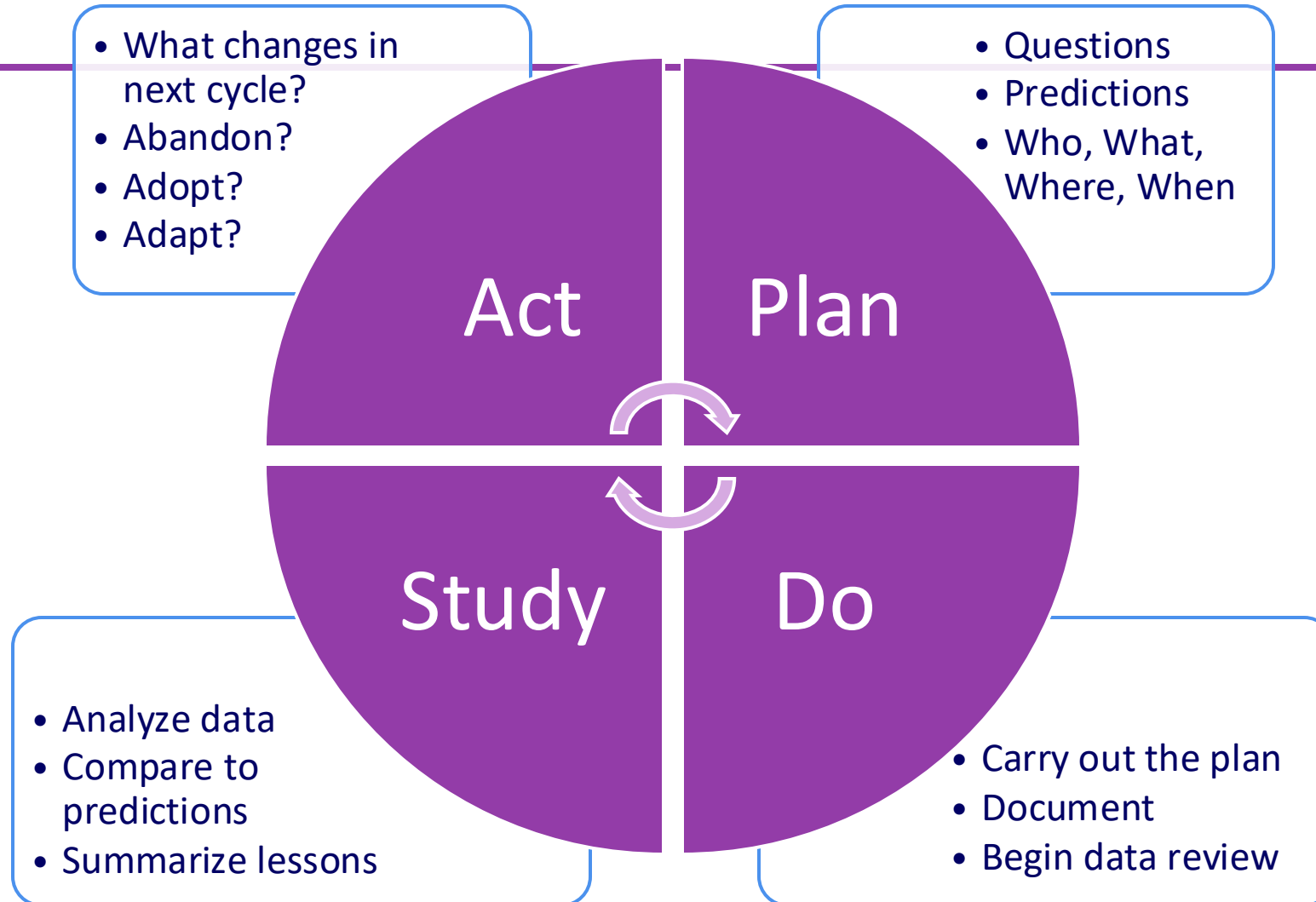
Change Project Data

Aim Statement: Increase the average parent attendance to *Strengthening Families Program* from 10 per meeting to 15 per meeting by end of 8-week session.

Strengthening Families Program Weekly Meeting Attendance



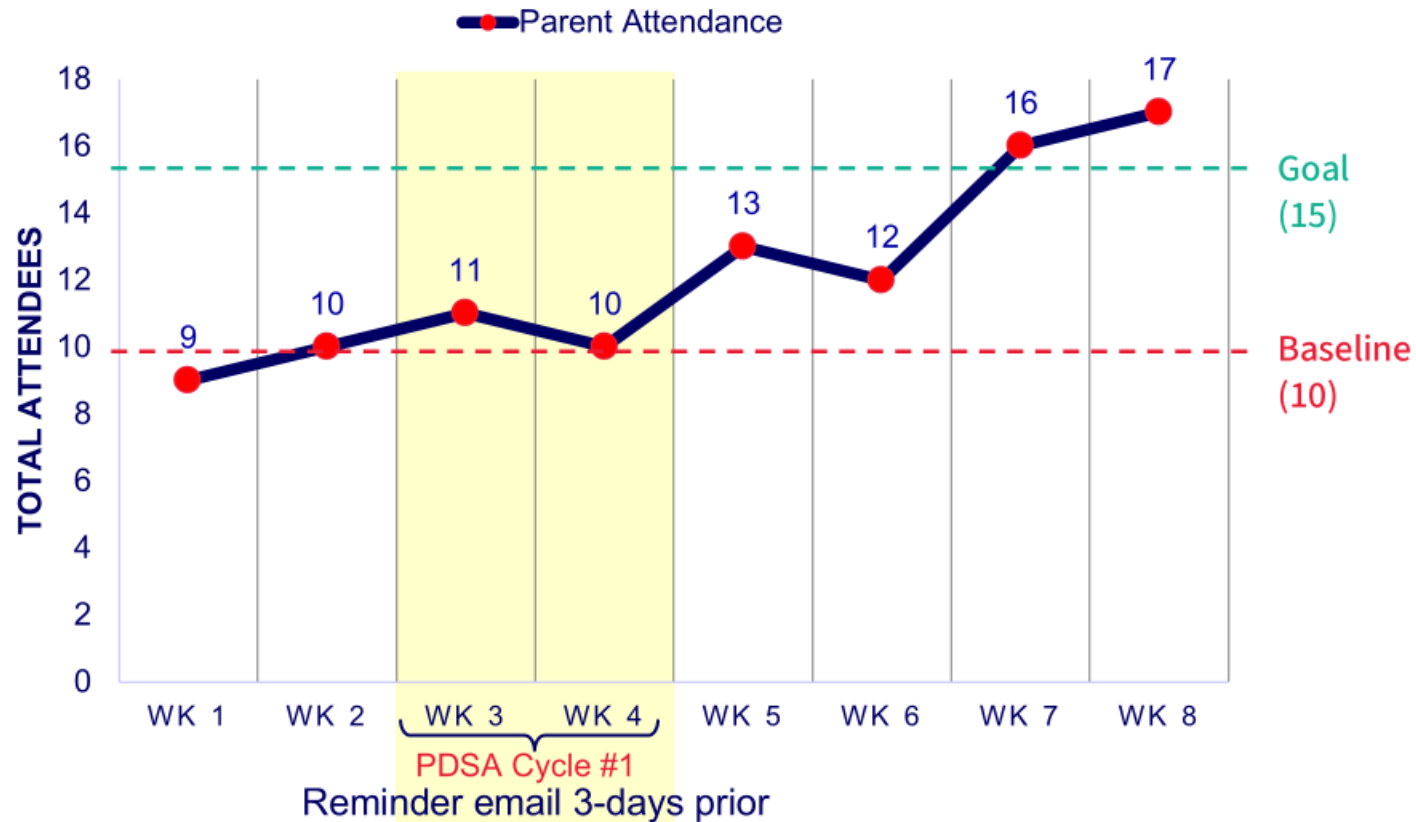
What change will we implement?



PDSA Cycle #1

Aim Statement: Increase the average parent attendance to *Strengthening Families Program* from 10 per meeting to 15 per meeting by end of 8-week session.

Strengthening Families Program Weekly Meeting Attendance



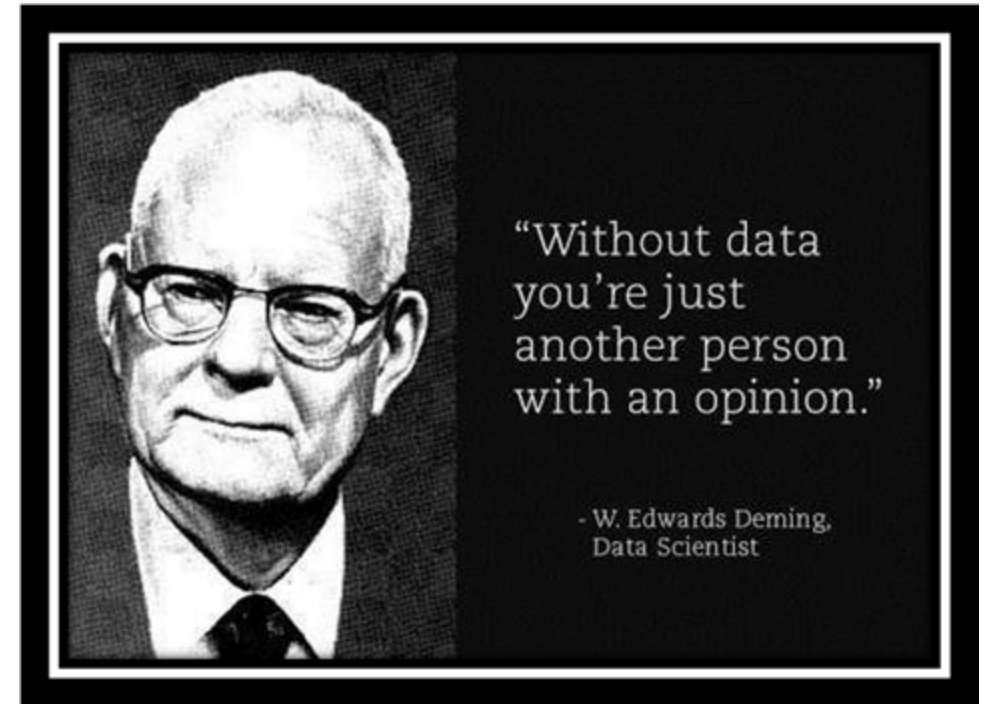


System Change Focus



System's Change Lens

- All work is a **process**
- 85% of customer problems are due to poor **processes**, not people
- To fix the problem you must focus on understanding root causes and improving the **process**
- Look at the entire system and how the parts work together

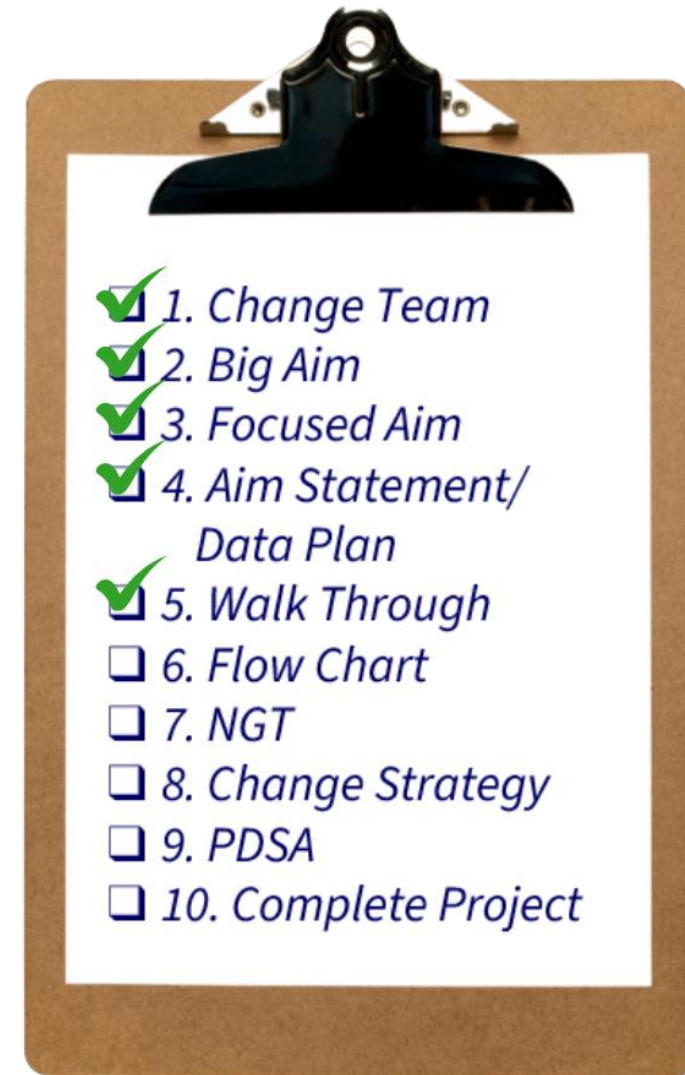




Customer Focus

How does it feel to be your customer?

The Walk-Through



Step 5: Key Points



- Role play the customer experience
- You are assessing the process not any one staff member
- Focus on feelings
- Is each step necessary?
- Is each step the best that it can be?



Key Take Aways



1. Having **effective leaders** is key to successful CQI projects
2. CQI is **not a solitary project**, it needs empowered team members who know the work
3. The **right data** at the right time is essential to guide CQI efforts
4. CQI is about **improving processes, not people**
5. The question at the heart of all CQI is “how can we improve what we do **to provide a better experience** for our customers?”

How We Can Help....



- Assist you in developing and implementing **CQI plans** for your organization
- Support you to **adopt a standardized CQI approach** across the entire organization
- Provide **technical assistance** for prioritizing a QI agenda
- Provide **coaching and consultation** for CQI leaders to build their skill set
- Hold **Training of Trainers (ToT)** opportunities to build internal expertise
- Review existing CQI plans and **provide recommendations**
- Share **standardized tools** to help implement CQI

CQI Project Example

Goal: To increase the number of clients treated in the program who meet the criteria for complex mental health needs to ensure these individuals are receiving services.

Objectives and outcomes:

- Staff members learn and apply the NIATx Change Model
- 50% increase in the number of clients admitted with higher needs

Timeline & Structure:

- Change leaders attend the NIATx Change Leader Academy
- Learning Sessions with peers
- Monthly individual coaching for the change teams/change leaders
- Development of a Change Project Charter

Participants:

- 3-5 behavioral health programs



Questions & Discussion

- What are your top priorities for implementing CQI or related efforts?
- What kind of implementation support might be helpful (CQI or otherwise)?





Resources, Requesting Support & Staying Connected

Register for FREE upcoming events on our website!

How Leaders Can Improve Workplace Climate for Successful Implementation of Mental Health Practices

Mondays, June 22 & 29 ~ 12:30-1:30 pm Pacific



Mark Ehrhart, PhD, Marisa Sklar, PhD, Greg Aarons, PhD

Register for FREE upcoming events on our website!

What Is Adaptation and Why Does It Matter? Guidance for Adapting Mental Health Practices and Programs

Wednesdays, June 24, July 8 & 22~ 1:00-2:00 pm Pacific



Ana Baumann, PhD, Shannon Wiltsey Stirman, PhD, and JD Smith, PhD

CMHIS provides support for organizations and systems on how to implement the most effective mental health care in their communities.

Resource Library

We are excited to announce the launch of our Resource Library. This curated collection features practical, pragmatic, and accessible resources tied to our eight core topics to support the preparation, implementation, and sustainment of effective mental health practices and programs. We will continue to populate the Resource Library over the next few weeks, so please check back for updates.

Search for Text

Year Published

Contributor

Resource Type

Target Audience

Experience Level

Keywords

Sort



Factors Influencing Implementation Infographic

Published: 2025
 This infographic provides an overview of factors influencing implementation, their key components, and why they matter when implementing a new effective mental health practice. The...



Implementation Strategies Infographic

Published: 2025
 This infographic provides an overview of implementation strategies, their key components, and why they matter when implementing a new effective mental health practice. The infographic...



Measurement-Based Care Infographic

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 This infographic provides an overview of measurement-based care, its key components, and why it matters when implementing a new effective mental health practice. The infographic...



Community Engagement and Needs Assessment Infographic

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 This infographic provides an overview of community engagement and needs assessment, their key components, and why they matter when implementing a new effective mental health...



National Repository of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures

Published: 2025
 The National Repository of Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) was identified and vetted by a national panel of experts on Measurement-Based Care (MBC). The PROMs are...



Program Evaluation Infographic

Published: 2025
 This infographic provides an overview of program evaluation, its key components, and why it matters when implementing a new effective mental health practice. The infographic...

Using Data to Improve Service Delivery: Continuous Quality Improvement

About the Core Topic

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a structured approach to quality that uses data to improve organizational systems, processes, service delivery, and outcomes. It is a form of process improvement in which an individual or team sets a goal for improvement, enacts a change, measures the effect of the change, and repeats this process until the goal is met.

Why This Topic Matters for Implementation

CQI ensures that effective programs and practices are integrated, maintained, and continuously improved within an organization. By focusing on systematic processes, data-driven decisions, collaboration, and ongoing evaluation, CQI enables organizations to ensure programs and practices are implemented with fidelity, embedded into daily operations, and used to enhance service quality and long-term success.

Key Components

- **Leadership Commitment and Support:** Leaders must champion the CQI vision and assess their organization's readiness and capacity for quality improvement. Leadership activities that support CQI include allocating resources and building a CQI infrastructure that honors front line staff expertise and communicates CQI efforts and priorities throughout the organization.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** In CQI, data such as key performance indicators and patient outcomes are used to guide organizational decisions and improvement efforts. Staff are key partners in gathering, reviewing, and analyzing data and may need data tools and training.
- **Employee Engagement and Collaboration:** Leaders can further engage staff by sharing open and transparent communication around CQI activities. Successful CQI approaches have a process for collecting and integrating staff feedback to support effective problem solving and improvement projects.
- **Client Focus:** All team members should learn about, collaborate with, and involve clients in CQI activities. Involvement may include gathering and integrating client feedback and prioritizing initiatives that enhance client satisfaction and outcomes.

Using Data to Improve Service Delivery: Continuous Quality Improvement

SUPPORT WE HAVE PROVIDED

- We held a NIATx Change Leader Academy on Process Improvement Tools to Achieve Your CQI Goals. Participants learned to apply NIATx quality improvement principles, lead change teams, and improve processes. Participants noted improvements in communication, strategic thinking, process flow, and community engagement. NIATx was integrated into grant sustainability planning, and CQI components were included in efforts to reintroduce universal screening.
- We hosted a learning session that included a general overview of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), its importance for behavioral health organizations, and the different orientation between CQI and quality assurance.

Key Resources

These practical resources are designed to help you move from planning to action:

- ***NIATx Workbook: An Introduction to the NIATx Model of Process Improvement.*** Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment (NIATx).
- ***NIATx: Easy and Powerful Process Improvement for Behavioral Health.*** Network for the Improvement of Addiction Treatment (NIATx).
- ***Quality Improvement Strategy Pt 1: Tools to Make and Measure Improvement.*** Safety Net Medical Home Initiative.

To view recorded learning sessions and online courses focused on continuous quality improvement and our other core topics, visit the [CMHIS Learning Lab](#).



Visit our website and
join our mailing list!
www.cmhisupport.org



Questions? Want to request
support? Contact us!
www.cmhisupport.org/contact



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Developed by the Center for Mental Health Implementation Support, Continuous Quality Improvement Workgroup, 2025.

This work was supported by cooperative agreement H79SM090078 (PI: Gotham) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS.

NEW! Introducing the CMHIS Learning Lab

CMHIS has launched the [CMHIS Learning Lab](#), a new online collection of self-paced courses and recorded learning sessions developed by CMHIS and our bi-regional Hubs.

What you'll find:

- Free, on-demand courses and recorded sessions, including certificates and continuing education credits
- Content covering the whole implementation process, whether you're just getting started or trying to sustain an existing practice or program
- Updates to come! Stay tuned for more learning opportunities in the near future



[**Access Learning Lab**](#)

NIATx Online Course

- NIATx Model
- Walk through the 10-steps of NIATx
- Change team members can use this course to establish a baseline for doing process improvement



CMHIS provides support for organizations and systems on how to implement the most effective mental health care in their communities.

Center for **Mental Health Implementation Support**

CMHIS TA Support Request

By completing this form, you help us better understand your specific needs and priorities so we can tailor our response.

We accept requests from grantees funded by SAMHSA's Center for Mental Health Services and organizations that oversee or directly provide mental health services.

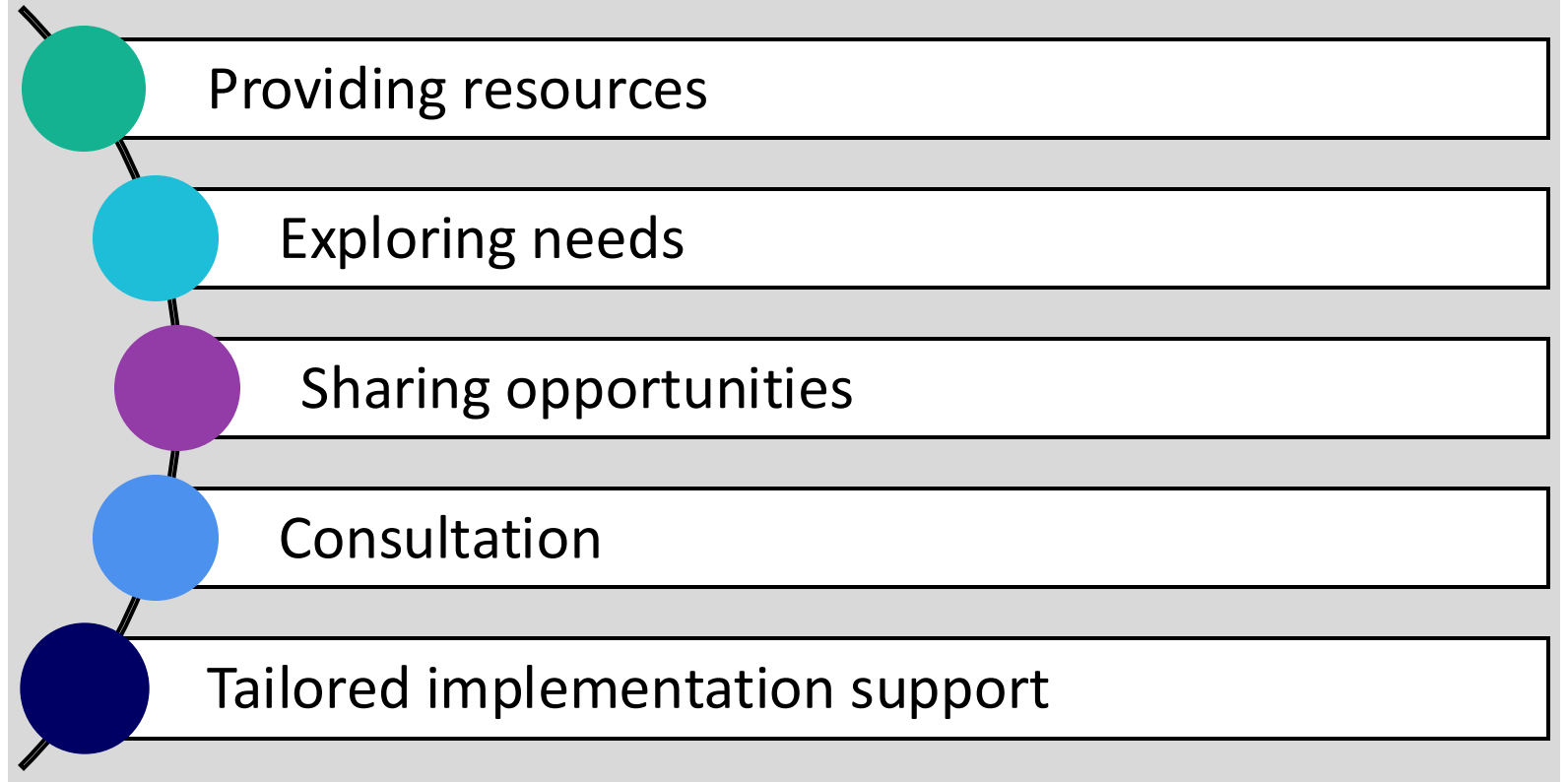
CMHIS provides support on the process of selecting, implementing, and sustaining practices. We do not provide clinical training on specific evidence-based practices.

Requesting Implementation Support

We're Responsive

You'll receive a response within a few business days.

Support may include:



Implementation Support Options



- Community needs, resources, and readiness.
- Marketing and communications.

- Adapt interventions
- Adjust to unique barriers and facilitators

- Support with workflow integration.
- Organizational technical assistance.
- Problem-solving program rollout.

- Use continuous quality improvement and data-driven decisions.
- Tailor program evaluation.

- Ensure long-term adoption.
- Institutionalize practices.
- Share successful models.

Meetings, Conferences, Gatherings

- Connect & meet with your team or group
- Partner to share information & resources
- Other meetings or convenings we should attend?



Let's Connect!



SCAN ME



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