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Coach's Corner

Continuous Quality Improvement

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Throughout the field of early childhood education, we hear the term “continuous quality improvement” often. But what exactly does that term mean? Continuous quality improvement (CQI) is used across a variety of disciplines. The concept originated in the business and health care fields. Study.com defines CQI as, “a management philosophy used to better their processes.” This definition may sound broad and maybe even a bit “corporate”. Let’s examine what CQI looks like in terms of early childhood education.



Each state has a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for their early childhood education programs. These systems are designed to help programs improve their quality for the children and families they serve. CONTINUOUS quality improvement views the concept of quality as ongoing and evolving based on research in our field.

“Continuous quality improvement is a process to ensure that programs are systematically and intentionally improving services and increasing positive outcomes for the children/families they serve. It is an environment that uses collected data to make positive changes, even when things are going well, rather than waiting for something to go wrong and then fixing it.”

-Linda K. Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Interdepartmental Liaison for
Early Childhood Development, ACF,
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

CQI is encouraged and supported across agencies working with early childhood education programs. While working on the current revision, Delaware Stars has put an emphasis on the “continuous” piece of CQI. We recognize that no matter what our roles are in the field we all have room to continue to grow and learn.

GROWTH

Voices from the Field

While we can give technical definitions of CQI, we know that it may mean something different to everyone. Below are some thoughts from early childhood educators.

“Continuous Quality Improvement is to observe what is in place and improve as you find better ways to do things. We are continuously looking at areas we need some refinement in. I think improvements go on all the time especially when you find ways to do something better.”

- Early Childhood Program Administrator

“Continuous Quality Improvement to me means me as a provider signing up for additional training classes to keep me educated about all ECE and aware of any changes there are in my profession. This also means taking a class again as a refresher course. To keep me on track.”

- Family Child Care Provider

“Continuous Quality Improvement to my program is having a collaboration with staff, family, the community, and other program affiliates to come together to plan and identify a running system that will strengthen and improve the quality of the program.”

- Large Family Child Care Provider

“Continuous Quality Improvement in education means to me a commitment to ongoing learning and growth for the teachers, students, and school. Good quality teachers and staff are needed for schools to improve and be successful.”

- Preschool teacher

These responses are from 4 very different types of programs and different roles in early childhood education but you can see a similar theme of growth. Each individual mentions something about a desire to continue learning. This desire is essential to a successful CQI system.



Ways to Promote CQI in Your Program

There are many ways to make CQI a focus in your program. Below, are some ideas to get you started!

Ongoing professional development (PD)

Commit to continuous learning by seeking out different types of PD. There are so many areas for educators to increase their knowledge. Administrators, consider talking with your staff about their individual interests in the field. Different educators may be interested in different topic areas. This leads to a well-rounded team of educators that can continue to help each other grow.

Current research and trends

Staying on top of new research in the field of early childhood education is a great way to promote CQI. The field grows and changes as we learn more through research and practice. It is important to have knowledge on current trends. Consider subscribing to newsletters from organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), or Zero to Three. These organizations also have memberships available for an annual fee.

Having an open mind

This may be the most important piece of the CQI puzzle. In the work we do, being open-minded is necessary. There will always be new guidance and recommendations as early childhood grows and changes. Being open to new information allows you to become a well-rounded, and more effective, educators.

Changing and growing as we learn more is not just a part of CQI, it is a part of all areas of life. When we know better, we do better. I challenge each of you to research or try out a new technique or idea related to early childhood education. This could mean looking for professional development in an area of interest or reading a book or article. We would love to hear about what you have learned! And always remember, learning is a lifelong journey.



Professional Development (PD):

- Strengthening Business Practices: Fiscal Management (Part 1 and 2) - Budgets, Planning, Projections, Financial Reports and Internal Controls for Center-Based Administrators
Live Virtual PD
- Strengthening Business Practices: Marketing Your Program for Center-Based Administrators
Live Virtual PD
- Strengthening Business Practices: Staff Recruitment and Retention for Center-Based Administrators and Large Family Child Care Providers
Live Virtual PD
- Strengthening Business Practices: Fiscal Management (Part 1 and 2): Budgets, Planning, Projections, Financial Reports and Internal Controls for Family Child Care Providers
Live Virtual PD
- Strengthening Business Practices: Marketing Your Program for Family Child Care Providers
Live Virtual PD
- Flip It! Flipping the Challenging Behavior PLUS
Live Virtual PD

to register for any of these workshops visit: www.dieecpd.org