

Paving your Way to Improvement: Using NACCHO's QI Roadmap

NACCHO's Accreditation Preparation & Performance Improvement (PI) Webinar Series
Thursday, May 29, 2014

In May 2014, NACCHO hosted a webinar entitled "Paving Your Way to Improvement: Using NACCHO's QI Roadmap." This webinar featured Cindan Gizzi, Community Assessment Manager for the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (WA) and Brandon Palinski, Quality Assurance & Accreditation Coordinator at the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department (OH). The presenters talked about how they have used NACCHO's QI Roadmap and QI Self-Assessment Tool in their work. A recording and other resources are available at www.naccho.org/accreditation/webinars.

The questions below were posed during the webinar.

In smaller health departments, the same people might be involved in different initiatives like QI, accreditation, performance management, etc. How do you avoid process burnout?

Cindan Gizzi's advice was to acknowledge that no one agency can do everything perfectly. She suggested looking for ways to combine or streamline different groups/processes. She gave an example of Tacoma-Pierce's workforce development plan focusing on supervisor training. When the LHD conducted an employee satisfaction survey and found that many employees had concerns about supervisory issues in various departments, management decided to combine the two initiatives instead of starting a new committee. She also suggested applying for mini-grants to bring in a consultant to provide support and help with burnout. Her final words of advice were to make sure that the person working to engage staff is a cheerleader and truly believes in the work. She explained that sometimes the coordinator needs to acknowledge that he/she doesn't have the enthusiasm or attitude to keep everyone going, so reinforcements are needed.

Brandon Palinski indicated that his LHD was conducting similar work to streamline committees. Brandon echoed Cindan's advice about applying for small grants and indicated that receiving NACCHO's Accreditation Support Initiative grant helped raise staff morale and prevented burnout by allowing an external QI expert to train the department in QI and facilitate QI Plan development with agency staff. Lastly, Brandon suggested trying to work with community partners to address performance improvement topics if staff capacity at the LHD is lacking.

Can you provide tips for forming a QI Team?

Brandon Palinski explained that a team was created at Toledo-Lucas to create the QI Plan he described in the webinar. Now that their Board of Health has approved the plan, their next step is to set up a QI Council. The structure, laid out by the QI Plan, indicates that it will include at least two members from each major program area, so staff turnover won't result in a major loss of program knowledge. Each member will serve 1-2 year cycles in order to prevent burnout and fatigue and to ensure that there are different levels of tenure present at once. The only permanent member, to create an anchor, will be the QI Coordinator. Toledo-Lucas strongly feels that there needs to be representation of both managers and frontline staff, so limits are set on both.

Cindan Gizzi has seen several different models for QI Councils at various LHDs. She strongly encouraged agencies to consider their organizational culture when they form their council.

Paving your Way to Improvement: Using NACCHO's QI Roadmap

NACCHO's Accreditation Preparation & Performance Improvement (PI) Webinar Series
Thursday, May 29, 2014

Do you have any tips on training *frontline* staff on quality improvement?

Toledo-Lucas trained all current staff on QI by facilitated viewing and discussion of online QI training modules. These modules will also be used to train new staff, ensuring they receive the same fundamental training as they come on board. Brandon's advice was to approach all staff as often as possible because even individuals with a significant amount of QI knowledge can benefit from training, or provide insights to staff who are newer to QI. He also recommends that if group trainings are held, to make sure leadership is visibly attending and engaging in the trainings so frontline staff can see the commitment they are making to QI and recognize QI as a lasting process instead of a fad.

Cindan mentioned the need to think about messaging as well as training. Leadership and executives may want to know high-level strategic concepts, whereas frontline staff may want to know how QI can help them do their daily work better. She mentioned several different formal training options that offer variable structures depending on the role of the participants (e.g., multiple "belt" levels of Lean Six Sigma training). With respect to training, she suggested Just-in-Time training as a good tactic for engaging frontline staff. Just-in-Time training includes day-long workshops that include tools training and developing aim statement and data collection.

How can I approach high level leadership about QI project ideas or other related work?

Cindan tries to focus on what motivates the people she is trying to convince. Her previous agency director was very motivated by competition, so she used that energy to motivate him to push their QI culture forward. The current director at her agency is more motivated by using data to make decisions or improvements, so she has changed her tactics to keep him engaged.

Brandon indicated that giving staff a chance to turn in their ideas or concerns anonymously, as well as to mid-level management, might be a good option for encouraging individuals to share their suggestions. Capturing suggestions at divisional staff meetings or during trainings can also be a good approach.

How can we handle staff resistance?

Toledo-Lucas was unable to reach 100% attendance at the QI trainings. Staff that were not in attendance are required to complete the online modules in the same fashion as new employees. To reduce resistance, Brandon and his team are working with leadership to send encouraging messages about completing the modules, as well as regular updates on the status of Toledo-Lucas's QI journey. The agency believes in constant communication and education on QI's importance as a way to overcome resistance, and therefore are pursuing these methods in lieu of punishment for staff who do not complete the training within the specified time targets.

Cindan suggested looking for a "quick win" project so staff can see the usefulness of QI and therefore become less resistant.

Paving your Way to Improvement: Using NACCHO's QI Roadmap

NACCHO's Accreditation Preparation & Performance Improvement (PI) Webinar Series
Thursday, May 29, 2014

When using the Self-Assessment Tool, do you have advice for how to select which foundational elements are the most relevant or important; I am concerned that senior managers won't have time to complete the entire questionnaire.

Brandon indicated that the order in which the tool is set up is the most logical, but he understands time constraints. He suggested having one or two staff members review the entire tool (including the questions and the introductory information for each element) and deciding which questions/sections are the most important for leadership to weigh in on, considering agency culture. Having a few staff members complete the tool before bringing it to leadership might also allow LHD's to demonstrate where frontline staff may view the agency versus where management may view it on specific foundational elements/areas.

What is the most important advice you can give others on this journey towards a QI culture?

Brandon's advice was that patience is key. The process might take a long time, but it will be worth the effort.

Cindan's advice was to have fun with the process; don't forget to celebrate successes – even small ones. The only way a quality culture works is if you drive out the fear in your organization – fear of being innovative, fear of showing how they are doing, fear of suggesting improvements. Managers need to emphasize that there are no penalties to doing this work.