

Staff Support and Performance During COVID-19: Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative Initiative



Research on the efficacy of social service programs points to [six quality domains](#) that are critical for improving people's lives. These quality areas (Accessibility, Family Engagement, Referrals & Partnerships, Staff Support & Performance, Trauma-Informed Approach, and Use of Evidence) -- along with performance measurement -- are the foundation of Root Cause's Continuous Quality Improvement [framework](#), [tools](#), and [practices](#).

This case study details the goals, experiences, and learnings of three direct service provider participants in the [Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative Initiative](#), who used continuous quality improvement (CQI) to address Staff Support & Performance amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff Support and Performance is a critical component of organizational and program performance. When staff members feel supported professionally, personally, and financially by their organizations, they are better prepared and more motivated to perform and excel in their roles. Strong staff support and performance is particularly important to continuous quality improvement, as CQI depends on the capacity of staff members to develop, test, and study improvement solutions. In turn, staff support and performance practices can be improved and expanded using continuous quality improvement tools and processes.


THE DUKE ENDOWMENT

Key Elements of Staff Support and Performance:

- **Consistent Staff Engagement.** When staff members are engaged by leaders in a consistent and meaningful way, they are more likely to feel valued by their team and organization, as well as connected to and aligned with the mission and goals of the organization. Staff engagement includes creating regular opportunities for staff to share feedback and suggestions and ensuring that staff feel their contributions are valued by their teams.
- **Cultivate Transparency and Respect.** Organizations should practice transparency by explicitly identifying and stating their cultural norms and values and instituting policies to hold all staff accountable for their behavior, including leadership. Clarity on roles and responsibilities, regular organization-wide updates, and opportunities for staff to hear directly from leadership also contribute to a culture of transparency and respect.
- **Investment in Compensation, Benefits and Professional Development.** Fair and equitable staff compensation, quality benefits, and opportunities for professional development are essential for creating job satisfaction, retaining staff, and delivering high-quality services. An organization's investments in compensation and benefits signal value, trust, and commitment to its staff members, which in turn helps to boost staff morale and engagement in their work.

Florence Crittenton Residential Program :



[Florence Crittenton Residential Program](#) offers shelter, comprehensive services, and life-skills training to pregnant and parenting young women, as well as young women in the foster care system.

<p>CQI Goal</p>	<p>To ensure residential program staff are up-to-date on program goals, operating procedures, team roles/responsibilities, and changes and that staff also know where to go to find information within the organization.</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>The Florence Crittenton team solicited staff feedback to develop a new checklist for frontline staff responsibilities, practiced redirecting staff members to information-rich emails, and began training staff members in Google Suites software. However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced a pivot to remote work during Cycle 1, and the team was not able to complete Google Suites training for all staff members.</p>
<p>Learnings</p>	<p>By the end of the cycle, it was clear that staff appreciated being consulted on valuable processes and had developed a better understanding of their colleagues' responsibilities. The CQI team also realized that their organization was capable of adaptation, after experiencing how the CQI process had helped them to get on the same page about program processes. By bringing staff into decision-making processes, the CQI team was able to create more transparency around frontline staff responsibilities, while emphasizing to staff members that their input is valued when shaping new processes.</p>

Communities in Schools (CIS):



The mission of [Communities In Schools \(CIS\)](#) is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.

<p>CQI Goal</p>	<p>To expand feedback opportunities for school-based staff in the wake of Covid-19's uncertainties and disruptions, in order to make well-informed plans for communication, transparency, and staff support over the summer and leading into the next school year</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>The CIS team created and administered a survey to school-based CIS staff to collect their feedback around CIS' COVID-related communications and the organization's supervision structure.</p>
<p>Learnings</p>	<p>The CQI team was able to use staff feedback to make a plan for communicating COVID-related updates to staff during the summer break and to refine supervision structure to better support program staff. Staff appreciated being consulted for their feedback and the CQI team plans to continue this feedback process as the organization undergoes changes in the future. By consistently engaging staff in this way, the CQI team will demonstrate value for staff input and transparency around organizational decisions.</p>

Father to Father, Inc.:



Father to Father, Inc.

[Father to Father](#) offers education and services uniquely tailored for fathers trying to rebuild their lives and their families.

<p>CQI Goal</p>	<p>To create a safe and inviting platform for staff to voice concerns to management, in order to strengthen staff morale and ultimately improve the quality of services delivered.</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>The team created an anonymous staff survey to identify issues and their root causes, then worked to implement changes to better support staff and create workplace conditions conducive to productivity and quality.</p>
<p>Learnings</p>	<p>This cycle demonstrated that staff morale is an important component of a successful workplace, particularly for small organizations like Father to Father. Leadership came away with a commitment to regularly gauge the ‘temperature’ of staff morale, to ensure that employees are happy within the workplace and able to provide quality services to the families they serve. Doing so will demonstrate both the organization’s commitment to staff well-being, as well as a recognition of staff expertise regarding the workplace.</p>

To learn more about **Continuous Quality Improvement** and the other CQI quality areas, check out Root Cause’s [CQI Resource Library](#).