

# Quality Improvement



## What is Quality Improvement (QI)?

QI is a method frequently used by public health systems and public health departments to be more effective, efficient and accountable for their actions. It allows the organizations to enhance the quality of services required for the continuous improvement of public health services in their communities with the goal of improving health outcomes in the population.

The American Public Health Association (APHA) and other members of the Accreditation Coalition adopted the following definition:

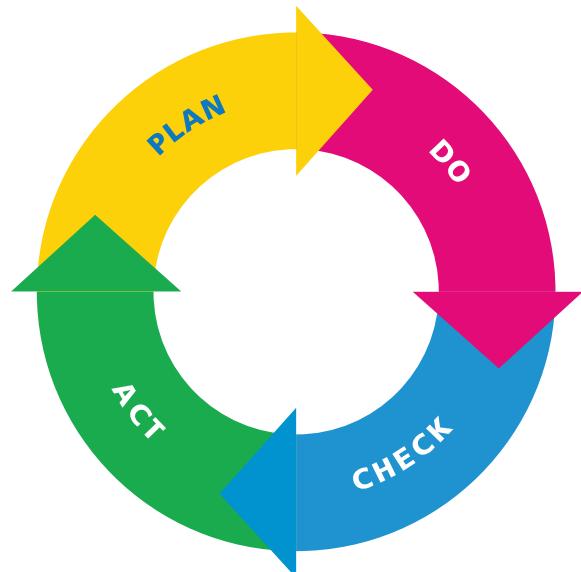
*Quality improvement in public health is the use of a deliberate and defined process, such as Plan-Do-Check-Act, which is focused on activities that are responsive to community needs and improving population health. It refers to a continuous and ongoing effort to achieve measurable improvements in the efficiency, effectiveness, performance, accountability, outcomes, and other indicators of quality services or processes that achieve equity and improve the health of the community.*

It is therefore a distinct management process and set of tools and techniques that are coordinated to ensure that health departments consistently meet their communities' health needs and strive to continuously improve the health status of the population..

## How is QI accomplished?

QI is accomplished by the application of different models that have proven to be successful in achieving continuous public health improvements in communities. One model frequently used is W. Edwards Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act, which is a four-step process designed to carry out changes for continuous quality improvement of public health services. It can involve P- identifying an opportunity for improvement and developing an action plan, D- implementing the plan, C- analyzing the effects of the implementation and A- determine if the Resources:

### PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT (PDCA) CYCLE



## PDCA Example

The mayor of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania was committed to improving efficiencies in all the city agencies with the help of Air Products and Chemicals, a Fortune 500 company that led the agencies QI efforts.

To begin this new improvement process he instituted Deming's QI model: P-D-C-A.

**PLAN:** Improve the process for issuing permits for food establishments.

**DO:** Reduce the number of forms previously used for issuing permits for food establishments.

**CHECK:** The reduced number of forms allowed applicants to reduce their travel time. Applicants used less time to complete applications. The new process which employees currently use to track permit status became easier.

**ACT:** The program was successful and the new system for issuing permits having proven to be more efficient was adopted. This success allowed the continuation of other challenges in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania's city agencies to be addressed.

# Improve the Health of your Communities

## Use QI Techniques Because They Work!

### Resources:

American Public Health Association Website

American Public Health Association 20-page brochure: *Quality Improvement in Public Health: It Works*, 2012

Criteria for Performance Excellence Framework

Decision Sciences 2000

Defining Quality Improvement in Public Health, Riley et.al. 2010

Journal of Public Health Management and Practice: January/February 2010

State of the USA Health Indicators: Letter Report Institute of Medicine, 2008

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