PROCESS IMPROVEMENT (PI)
IN THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION DIVISION

- 1997 – our decision-making and the way we implement changes in our processes that affect outcomes we deliver to customers needs to be data-based.
- Identified PI course: 3-day "hands on" with 2/3 business simulation and 1/3 lecture. Based on Deming/quality management principles. Project "storybooks" facilitate correct methodology and document team decisions.
- Emphasis: use consistent PI methodology and create a "common dictionary" for staff.
- By Spring 1998: 80% of division managers trained.
- May – Oct. 1998: 3 pilot projects (12 managers + 6 lead workers in 2 sections). Avg. 13% staff time; 6% manager time. Emphasis: breaking down "silos" between sections.
- Recommendations and surveys used to develop proposal for division-wide training. Exec Team approved:
    - Team training for 238 FTE: $6500 + personal services costs = $12,000 - $15,000
    - Licensing 4 trainers in PI and training 54 FTE: $25,000
    - Training more groups of 18: $270 + materials, time

- Early 1999 – established "GRIP" (Group Responsible for Implementing Prism) to plan, coordinate, and implement PI; 4 managers, 4 staff. Key activities:
    - Training a critical mass
    - Certifying trainers and developing team coaches
    - 8 – 10 hr. team skills training for all 18 units (project team work, conflict resolution, reaching consensus)
    - Developing capacity for customer satisfaction surveys to obtain process data (pilots using outside vendors were very costly and unsatisfactory in deliverables)
    - All-staff meetings; "how to" open house for managers
    - Using team experiences to improve future projects

- 2000 – surveyed managers/Exec Team re: early efforts
- Fall 2000 – offsite for all 30 WCD managers; surveys and brainstorming lead to 12 categories of needs to improve PI planning and implementation. Subcommittees: Resources, Modeling PI Leadership, Communications, and Training.
- 2001: 89 recommendations, including:
    - Developing knowledge base for resources, project documentation, etc.
    - Training managers: how to sponsor projects
    - Develop project charters to provide teams clear direction (now used elsewhere)
    - Develop survey development training
    - Weekly communication about related activities
    - Collect 6-month data about skills usage
    - Provide recognition
    - Develop division resources ("who do I go to for…")
    - Identify when PI is appropriate or not
    - "Small bites, quick successes" whenever possible (blocks of time)

- 2004- ended GRIP (PI implemented); started PIC (Process Improvement Committee). Idea adapted from Tri-met; 4 managers and 4 staff.
- PIC solicits ideas, interviews to determine if appropriate for PI, and recommends 2 – 3 ideas each quarter to Exec Team based on resources and priorities.
- 2004: 33% of staff used tools in 40 cases; 27% more than twice; 75% used flowcharts.
- Focus: Long-term; continuous improvement; culture change. Not a start/stop initiative.

- Examples of projects:
    - Temporary Disability Rating Standards
    - Phone Consultations - benefits, return-to-work
    - Notices of Closure
    - Rules Promulgation
    - Policy Development
    - Director's Orders
    - File Tracking
    - Worksite Modifications
    - Medical Dispute Resolution orders

- Support division performance measures: timely and accurate benefits to workers, access to return-to-work assistance, timely and objective dispute resolution, customer satisfaction, etc.

- 2006 – Shift to "Regulatory Redesign"
- Higher level view: 30,000 foot view vs. the on-the-ground focus on processes
- Philosophy:
    - explain what is expected of those we regulate
    - stand back and let them do it (not hand-holding or "paternalistic")
    - hold them accountable for doing it by verifying (with consequences).
- Systemic, not "case-based," regulation.
- Function reviews vs. process improvement – higher-level, fundamental questions:
    - Are we doing/regulating/enforcing/providing the right things?
    - What are indicators of system health?
    - Do our current regulatory functions, methods, and data support those indicators?
    - If not, what do we need?
- Higher-level tie-in to performance measures and key system indicators.
- Redesign basic functions to support Regulatory Redesign decisions, then establish supporting processes. PI methodology can then be used over time to improve the processes based on customer data.

- Pilot 2006 – function review methodology
- 2006 – 2008 - Function reviews in Compliance, Dispute Resolution, Benefits, and Medical areas
- 2008 and on-going – implementation of recommendations (Examples; audits, MCOs)
- Over 1,000 recommendations; roughly 96% approved by Steering Committee.
- Recommendations include statutory and rule changes, data system changes, etc.
- Steering Committee tracking implementation and impacts.
- Focus: long-term, higher-level focus on improving system health supported at the lower process level by PI efforts.