

Quality Improvement and Quality Assurance Delineation

Definitions:

Quality Improvement (QI): “QI consists of systematic and *continuous* actions that lead to measurable improvement in health care services and the health status of targeted patient groups.” (HRSA)

Quality Assurance (QA): “QA refers to a broad spectrum of evaluation activities aimed at ensuring *compliance* with minimum quality standards. The primary aim of quality assurance is to demonstrate that a service or product fulfills or meets a set of requirements or criteria.” (HRSA)

QI/QA Example:

Consumer complaints and grievances: The QA function would be monitoring the requirements of reporting and responses to the consumer and provider of the complaints. The QI function of this activity is looking at the process for reviewing trends and determining gap through data analysis, which then leads to continuous quality improvement actions to improve the consumer’s experience. The QA compliance function is directed by contracts and rule specifications. The QI function is driven by data and process.

Generalization of skills:

The skills needed for QA are emphasized in technical, detail and program evaluation. The skills needed for QI are emphasized in process development, communication and coaching. Performance management is an example of a shared skill set.

Quality Management Activities

