Tracking What Works
Harm Reduction Housing Programs
How-To Template

Our Commitment

We are dedicated to providing high-quality, participant-centered services. This means not only doing our best but constantly reflecting, evaluating, and improving how we serve people. Quality Management (QM) helps us ask: *What's working? What's not? And how can we do better?*

By regularly gathering input from participants and staff, reviewing data, and working across teams (internally and externally), we aim to make services safer, more effective, and more responsive to participant needs.

1. Quality Assurance / Quality Improvement (QA/QI) Overview

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is a team effort to ensure services are strong, respectful, and culturally responsive.

How to Do It:

- Form a CQI team with program leads, quality staff, and frontline workers.
- Meet monthly or quarterly to review data and identify improvement areas.
- Gather feedback from participants and staff (e.g., surveys, focus groups).
- Make data-driven decisions based on what you learn.
- Embrace a learning culture—see problems as chances to improve.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor quality across all service areas—clinical, administrative, and programmatic.

How to Do It:

- Choose a few key performance indicators (KPIs) (e.g., housing retention, client satisfaction).
- Use spreadsheets or dashboards to track data.
- Meet quarterly to review and update indicators as needed.
- Invite staff to suggest new or better ways to measure impact.

Data Sources May Include:

- Internal records or funder reports
- Chart reviews and peer reviews
- Participant and staff surveys
- Focus groups or listening sessions
- Safety and incident reports

3. Quality Improvement (QI)

We use both numbers and stories to improve our services.

How to Improve:

- Create action plans with clear responsibilities and timelines.
- Monitor progress and adjust as needed.
- Update policies and share changes with staff.
- Review findings during CQI or team meetings.

4. Peer Reviews

Each program does quarterly peer reviews to ensure quality and consistency.

Steps:

- Assign files or charts for review using simple checklists.
- Review and fix issues within 30 days.
- Summarize findings and share themes with the team.
- Use results to guide training or process updates.

5. Utilization Reviews

These reviews help track service access, participation, and contract compliance.

What to Review:

- Referral completions and waitlists
- Case management or service use
- Caseloads and staffing capacity
- Program exits (e.g., voluntary, eviction)
- Exit destination
- File reviews and housing retention
- Report trends annually to leadership/Board

6. Monitoring Staff Performance

Support staff through structured evaluation and ongoing feedback.

How to Support Staff:

- Conduct annual performance evaluations.
- Provide regular individual and group supervision.
- Offer training and development opportunities.
- Encourage two-way feedback and open communication.

7. Confidentiality

Protecting participant privacy is essential.

How to Maintain Confidentiality:

- Store files securely (locked cabinets or encrypted systems).
- Limit access to authorized staff.
- Get written consent before sharing information.
- Train staff on privacy policies yearly.
- Educate participants about their privacy rights.

8. Program File / Chart Maintenance

Participant records must be maintained securely and follow funder/legal requirements.

How to Maintain Records:

- Lock up paper files.
- Use secure, password-protected systems for electronic files.
- Retain records for at least 7 years.
- Store older records off-site securely (e.g., Iron Mountain).
- Track access to both paper and electronic files.

9. Participant Satisfaction

We gather feedback twice a year to help guide improvements.

How to Collect and Use Feedback:

- Use short, culturally relevant surveys and/or focus groups.
- Assign a neutral staff member to collect feedback.
- Review results and share summaries with the team and Board.
- Use findings to shape training and service improvements.

10. Grievances

Participants have the right to speak-up about their experience and a clear and consistent grievance process is a mandatory requirement of most public funding streams.

How to Manage Grievances:

- Ensure the policy is clear and in plain language maps out what can be expected at every stage.
- Explain the grievance process during enrollment and revisit with staff and participants, regularly
- Post grievance forms in visible places, in multiple languages.
- Encourage resolution with direct staff first, if possible.
- Escalate unresolved issues to program managers.
- Track and review grievances quarterly to spot trends.
- Let participants know about external complaint options.

11. Safety and Adverse Events

We prioritize safety with clear procedures and staff training.

How to Respond:

- Train staff on overdose response, risk assessment, and mandated reporting.
- Report all incidents immediately to supervisors.
- Conduct root cause analyses within 30 days for serious events.
- Update safety protocols based on findings.

12. Risk Management

We aim to prevent harm and respond quickly when problems occur.

How to Manage Risk:

- Train staff on critical incident response.
- Submit incident reports within 24–48 hours.
- Supervisors review and follow up as needed.
- Analyze serious events (e.g., client deaths) and create improvement plans.

13. Communicating Quality Findings

Sharing results helps everyone stay informed and involved.

How We Communicate:

- **To Staff:** Managers review quality checks (e.g., chart audits) and share simple reports.
- **To Leadership:** Directors receive summaries with key info:
    - Number of files reviewed
    - Common issues
    - Plans for improvement
    - Incident reports and grievances
    - Participant and staff feedback
- **To the Team:** Teams discuss results during meetings to create shared solutions.
- **To the Board:** Reports inform decision-making on budgets, policies, and programming.

Tailoring the Plan to Your Organization

Organizations vary widely—this plan can scale based on your size and resources.

Small Organizations / Limited Capacity

- Use simple tools like checklists and free survey platforms.
- Focus on just a few high-priority indicators.
- Integrate quality checks into daily work.
- Partner with other orgs for training or support.

Medium Organizations

- Assign a staff person to coordinate QM activities.
- Conduct quarterly peer and utilization reviews.
- Use shared databases or cloud tools for tracking.
- Build feedback into your routine.

Large Organizations

- Create formal CQI committees across departments.
- Use electronic health records, data dashboards, and HMIS systems.
- Conduct detailed data analysis.
- Invest in professional development.
- Include participant voices in quality efforts (e.g., advisory boards).
- Standardize feedback and grievance processes with multiple access points and languages.