

## Champions Assure Process is Linked to the ISP



### IDEA 2: CREATING A CULTURE OF QUALITY: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

**“Quality is the result of a carefully constructed cultural environment. It has to be the fabric of the organization, not part of the fabric.”-Philip Crosby**



#### **IN A NUTSHELL:**

Quality is a concept that is widely discussed but not easily defined. Lots of tools have been developed for measuring and evaluating the quality of services and the satisfaction of people who use them. And while each tool is different, the intended outcome of most tools is the same: to support people in having better lives.

Yet, quality improvement practices, methods and tools have little impact if an organization’s *culture* does not encourage good work. The quality improvement process begins whenever the commitment is made to improve the lives of people. Strategic

planning, focus groups, studies, assessments, white papers and surveying tools are all instruments that are available to organizations to assist in their organizational learning about quality.

Yet, true quality improvement is a mindset, with each of us constantly asking ourselves: “What can I and the organization do to make THIS person’s life better?” Accordingly, we hope that questions in this paper encourage introspection and collaboration both on a personal level and a collective level. The questions are organized by the themes that seem to always be present in the cultures of quality organizations.

Hopefully, the process of simply *asking* these questions will trigger thoughtful reflection and dialogue that will improve the quality of services and of people's lives.

**VALUES AND VISION:  
KNOWING WHO WE ARE**

*"We go where our vision is"*  
- Joseph Murphy

**For Our Organization:**

- Are our practices consistent with our values and our vision?

**For Myself:**

- Do I believe a person with a developmental disability is my equal?

**INTROSPECTION:**

*"Quality begins on the inside... and then works its way out."*

-Bob Moawad

**For Our Organization:**

- Do we understand that our organizational success is defined by the quality of lives of the people we support, not by how many buildings we have or the size of our budget?

**For Myself:**

- Do I appreciate my own strengths and gifts? Do I use my strengths and gifts in my work?

**THE VALUE OF EQUALITY**

"When I realized that people with disabilities are truly my equal, I realized we needed to offer better services."

-manager of  
organization in  
southeast region

**REFLECTION:**

*“From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.”*

*-Peter Drucker*

**For Our Organization:**

- Do we create an organizational culture that allows and learns from mistakes?

**For Myself:**

- Do I create time in my day to think and reflect on “how things are going” in the life of the person I’m supporting?

**INVITATION:**

*“There cannot be improvement without new ideas, and there cannot be new ideas without the participation of all.”*

*-Unknown*

**For Our Organization:**

- Do we create opportunities for people who use services and direct support staff to

think creatively and recommend better ways of doing things?

**For Myself:**

- Do I make people served, staff or others new to our organization feel welcome by introducing myself and creating opportunities for conversation?

**DIALOGUE:**

*“There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And questions are the breath of life for a conversation.”*

*-James N. Miller*

**CONVERSATION:  
THE LIVING QI SYSTEM**  
An organization in the northwest area says their most important QI system is the informal one of talking with each other, noting “conversations trigger other questions.”

**For Our Organization:**

- Do we encourage idea sharing by listening to new ideas without judgment?

**For Myself:**

- Do I contribute my opinion openly and respectfully?

**SOME WAYS ORGANIZATIONS  
IN NEW MEXICO ENCOURAGE  
DIALOGUE**

- Managers regularly going with person served and staff to activities.
- Having weekly staff breakfasts.
- Having regular brainstorming sessions around a particular person.
- Just visiting with staff and asking "how are things going?"

**CURIOSITY and LEARNING:**

*"The cure fore boredom is curiosity."*  
-Ellen Parr

**For our Organization:**

- Do we create formal *and* informal opportunities for learning outside mandatory trainings?

**For Myself:**

- Am I fascinated by the person I support and always curious about learning new things, even if I have known the person for a long time?

**PERSISTENCE:**

*"Persistence is the twin sister of excellence: one is a matter of quality; the other, a matter of time."*  
-Unknown

**For Our Organization:**

- Do we accept that if we wait for conditions to be perfect before improving services, we will not accomplish very much?

### For Myself:

- Do I continue to advocate for a person, even if no one seems to be listening?

#### **PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF:**

When a person they support wanted to work with kids, an organization in the northwest region noted, " we must've talked to 30 day care centers" before they found the right fit.

#### **FOCUS:**

*"Our thoughts create our reality--where we put our focus is the direction we tend to go."*

*-Peter McWilliams*

### For Our Organization:

- Do our quality improvement tools lead to better outcomes for people or simply create more process and paperwork?

### For Myself:

- Do I keep my attention on what matters most--building a quality life for a person-- and avoid getting caught up in "drama," gossip, or pessimistic thinking?

#### ✓ **CHECK IT OUT:**

#### **GOOD RESOURCES**

- Good to Great, Jim Collins, Harper Business Publishers, 2001
- Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges, C. Otto Sharmer, Society for Organizational Learning, 2007
- "Becoming a Person-Centered System," Michael W. Smull, Mary Lou Bourne, Helen Sanderson; April, 2009; available at: <http://www.nasddd.org/index.shtml>

## **TRY IT OUT: ACTIVITIES, EXERCISES AND COMPELLING QUESTIONS**

- For additional questions, take a look at “Exploring Quality: Questions for Organizations and Individuals,” found in the *And Yet More* section of this Idea Book.
- Host a *World Café* style conversation about how the organization can improve its supports for the people it serves. For more about the *World Café* approach, go to [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)
- Instead of conducting paper surveys, consider having individual conversations or focus groups with people using services, staff and other stakeholders. Consider inviting people who use services and their staff to help facilitate these conversations.
- If you are a manager, invite the people you manage to give you feedback on your performance as it relates to supporting outcomes for people.