

MODULE 9: USING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TOOLS TO FOCUS ON MEASUREMENT

Module Introduction

In the previous module we began our discussion of how data should be used in quality improvement initiatives to analyze processes, identify problems, and measure performance. In this module you will be introduced to a variety of tools that will help you collect and use data.

Module Objectives

- ◆ Explain why it is important to be familiar with various tools for quality improvement
- ◆ Name three important rules for brainstorming
- ◆ Identify (through brainstorming) a number of things that can be measured in a health facility
- ◆ Discuss strengths and weaknesses of alternative brainstorming techniques
- ◆ Determine the most appropriate quality improvement tools (presented in the appendix) for various situations

►►► Why Learn About Different Tools?

“To someone with only a hammer in his/her toolbox, everything looks like a nail.”

- Source unknown

►►► Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way for groups to generate a large number of ideas in a short amount of time. It is particularly helpful when trying to generate ideas about problems, areas for improvement, possible causes, other solutions, and resistance to change.

Brainstorming produces ideas by encouraging participation of all members through both structured and unstructured thinking on a given topic. For brainstorming to be effective, participants must feel free to offer new ideas without fear of being criticized. There are several ground rules that should be followed to make the brainstorming event successful. They are:

- ◆ Do not discuss ideas during the brainstorming session (it will slow down the session and limit the flow of ideas)
- ◆ Do not judge others: Criticism of another’s idea is not allowed
- ◆ Every idea is acceptable: Be unconventional
- ◆ Build on the ideas of others
- ◆ Quantity of ideas counts

Brainstorming can be unstructured (each person voices an idea as it enters their mind) or structured (each person gives an idea in rotation). Structured brainstorming works well when people are unfamiliar with one another or less talkative, as it ensures everyone participates.

Follow the following steps when brainstorming:

1. Before you begin the session, allow everyone a few minutes to generate some ideas.
2. Generate ideas using either a structured or unstructured format. Write each and every idea on a flipchart.
3. Once ideas have been generated and recorded, clarify and combine similar ideas
4. Agree on a way to judge the ideas (e.g., prioritization tools) and reduce the list to fewer choices.

▶▶▶ Brainstorming Session: Health Facility Measures

Directions: Use the space provided below to record the ideas generated during the brainstorming session.

Clients / Clients' Families	Healthcare Providers / Employees
Facilities / Equipment / Supplies	Processes and Procedures

►►► Quality Improvement Tools

Previously introduced in Module 5, Introduction to Quality Improvement Concepts, the table below identifies various tools that can be used to facilitate the work of teams or individuals involved in quality improvement efforts. The tools can be used alone, or in conjunction with one another. The table identifies the quality improvement step(s) in which each tool has been found to be particularly useful.

Matrix of Quality Improvement Tools by QI Step

Tool	Quality Improvement Step			
	Step 1: Identify	Step 2: Analyze	Step 3: Develop	Step 4: Test & Implement
Data Collection	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brainstorming	✓	✓	✓	
Affinity Analysis	✓	✓	✓	
Creative Thinking Techniques	✓		✓	
Prioritization Tools				
Voting	✓	✓	✓	
Prioritization Matrices	✓	✓	✓	
Expert Decision Making	✓	✓	✓	✓
Systems Modeling	✓	✓		✓
Flow Charts	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cause and Effect Analysis		✓		
Force Field Analysis		✓		✓
Statistical & Data Presentation				
Bar & Pie Charts	✓	✓		✓
Run Charts	✓	✓		✓
Pareto Charts	✓	✓		✓
Benchmarking	✓		✓	
Gantt Charts		✓		✓
Quality Assurance Storytelling	✓	✓	✓	✓

Exercise: Review of QI Tools

Directions: individually or in small groups of 3 to 4, review the tools appendix and identify important information about each tool. Use the table below to record information you deem important during the activity debrief.

Quality Improvement Tools

Tool	Notes
Data Collection	
Brainstorming	
Affinity Analysis	
Creative Thinking Techniques	
Prioritization Tools	
– Voting	
– Prioritization Matrices	
Expert Decision Making	
Systems Modeling	

Flow Charts	
Cause-and-Effect Analysis	
Force Field Analysis	
Statistical & Data Presentation	
– Bar & Pie Charts	
– Run Charts	
– Pareto Charts	
Benchmarking	
Gantt Charts	
Quality Assurance Storytelling	

▶▶▶ Quality Improvement Tools

This space is provided for any additional information you deem important to record during this module.

▶▶▶ Quality Improvement Tools

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MODULE 10: THE NEW ZIN OBELISK

Module Introduction

In this module you will participate in a game called “The New Zin Obelisk.” You will work with a team of people to determine on which day of the week the obelisk was completed. An obelisk is a four-sided pillar (usually large) that gradually tapers as it rises and terminates in a pyramid.

Module Objectives

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- ◆ Recognize behaviors that are conducive to team performance
- ◆ Recognize behaviors that hinder team performance
- ◆ Suggest ways to improve team problem solving in your own facility
- ◆ Discuss important leadership behaviors that emerged during the game
- ◆ Explain some of the lessons learned by participating in The New Zin Obelisk

▶▶▶ The New Zin Obelisk¹ / Game Instructions

In the ancient city of Atlantis, a solid, rectangular obelisk called a Zin was built in honor of the goddess Charlotta. The structure took less than two weeks to complete.

The task of your team is to determine on which day of the week the obelisk was completed. You have twenty minutes to complete this task. Each team member will be given cards containing information related to building the Zin. You may share this information orally, but you may not show your cards to other team members.

¹ Reproduced from IMPROVING WORK GROUPS: A PRACTICAL MANUAL FOR TEAM BUILDING (Revised). Dave Francis and Don Young. San Diego, California: Pfeiffer & Company, 1992.

Discussion Questions

1. What behaviors helped your team accomplish this task?
2. What behaviors hindered your team from completing the task?
3. What behaviors were exhibited as your team members learned to collaborate with one another?
4. How might you suggest improving the performance of teams that collaborate at your facility?
5. Did a leader emerge from your team? What behaviors did the leader demonstrate?
6. What impact did the time restriction have on your team's performance?
7. What emotions were apparent among your team members as the task progressed?

The New Zin Obelisk / Lessons Learned

Directions: In the space provided below, record what the class found to be the important lessons learned from The New Zin Obelisk.

MODULE 11: FOCUS ON TEAMWORK

Module Introduction

Teamwork is one of the four principles of quality assurance. When people work in teams, they are able to combine their talents and accomplish things that individually they would not be able to do. This module introduces several concepts associated to working in teams.

Module Objectives

At the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- ◆ State that a focus on teamwork is one of the four principles of quality improvement
- ◆ Explain why teams are important to quality improvement efforts
- ◆ Explain what one might expect to happen during the different stages of team development
- ◆ Discuss best practices for creating teams that are high performing
- ◆ Discuss best practices for running a team meeting
- ◆ Recognize phenomena that often occur in team decision-making
- ◆ Identify several ways to overcome team decision-making phenomena
- ◆ Talk about what it means to be a good team member

▶▶▶ Focus on Teamwork

Teamwork is one of the four principles of quality improvement. Other principles include client focus, understanding work as processes and systems, and testing changes and emphasizing the use of data. The four principles of quality improvement were introduced in Module 5. Each is briefly described in the table below.

The Four Principles of Quality Assurance	
◆ Client Focus	Services should be designed so as to meet the needs and expectations of clients and community.
◆ Understanding Work as Processes and Systems	Providers must understand the service system and its key service processes in order to improve them.
◆ Testing Changes and Emphasizing the Use of Data	Changes are tested in order to determine whether they yield the required improvement. Data are used to analyze processes, identify problems, and to determine whether the changes have resulted in improvement.
◆ Teamwork	Improvement is achieved through the team approach to problem solving and quality improvement.

▶▶▶ The Value of Teams

Teams are important in process improvement efforts several reasons.

- ◆ While an individual might have knowledge gaps about a process, a group of people will likely have a more complete understanding. Each person in a team can share their understanding and perspective, building a complete picture of the process.
- ◆ Mutual support and cooperation is often created when people work together on a project. This feeling of good will often leads to an increased commitment to make improvements.
- ◆ Team accomplishments often lead to increased confidence among individuals. Competence and confidence create an upward spiral where competence builds confidence and confidence builds competence.
- ◆ A proposed solution will meet with much less resistance if the people who will be impacted by the change have contributed to the development of the solution.

►►► Stages of Team Development

Decades of research in teams and work groups show that there are five stages of team development. The five stages have been labeled forming, storming, norming, performing, and closing. It is generally believed that groups become more effective as they proceed through the stages, and are most effective when they reach stage four—performing. Team development is not always one way—different situations may cause the team to return to an earlier stage. This might include the addition of a new member, a change in leadership, or the introduction of a new task for the team. Each of the stages is briefly described below.

1. **Forming.** During the forming stage, a great deal of uncertainty exists about the purpose, structure and leadership of the team. Members experiment to determine what types of behavior is acceptable. This stage is complete when members begin to think of themselves as part of the team.
2. **Storming.** During the storming stage there is a great deal of conflict within the team. Members accept the group's existence, but there is resistance to the constraints on individuality that result as a function of team membership. Conflict also develops over who will control the team. This stage is complete when there is a relatively clear hierarchy of leadership within the group.
3. **Norming.** During the norming stage, close relationships develop and the team demonstrates cohesiveness. The team develops an identity and members enjoy camaraderie with one another. This stage is complete when the group structure becomes established and the team develops a shared understanding of how a team member should behave.
4. **Performing.** During the performing stage the team structure is in place and accepted. The team focus has changed from establishing group norms to performing the task at hand. It is during this stage that the team performs at its best.
5. **Closing.** During the closing stage, teams that are not permanent work groups prepare to disband. Some team members will enjoy the feeling of accomplishment, while others will begin to mourn the loss of camaraderie gained during the life of the team.

▶▶▶ Best Practices for Creating High Performing Teams

Building a team that functions well requires hard work and commitment. In “The Wisdom of Teams”, authors Katzenbach and Smith¹ recommend eight important practices in the creation of high performing teams. They are:

1. **Establish urgency and direction.** All members need to believe that the team has an urgent and worthwhile purpose. Furthermore, they need to know the expectations for the team.
2. **Select members based on skills and skill potential, not personalities.** Teams need complementary skills to perform well. Three categories of skills are required: 1) technical and functional, 2) problem-solving, and 3) interpersonal. When you can't select members with the necessary skills, it will be important to develop them.
3. **Pay particular attention to first meetings and actions.** Recognize that first impressions mean a lot. During a team's first meeting, participants will monitor the signals given by others to confirm, or dispel assumptions that they might have. In particular, people will want to understand who will have the greatest influence on the team and if they will play an important role.
4. **Set some clear rules for behavior.** It's important to set rules to promote focus, commitment, openness, and trust among team members. Some important rules pertain to attendance, discussion, confidentiality, constructive feedback, and contributions.
5. **Set and seize upon a few immediate achievable goals.** In order to gain momentum, it's important to establish a few challenging yet achievable goals that the team can achieve early during its lifecycle. Once it has achieved success once, it will find it easier to achieve again.
6. **Challenge the group regularly with new facts and information.** New information encourages the team to redefine its understanding of the quality improvement opportunity. This leads to a clearer understanding of its purpose and goals.
7. **Spend lots of time together.** In order to become high performing, teams must spend time together, especially at the beginning. The time spent together should be planned and unplanned, formal and informal. Meetings should be held every 2 to 4 weeks to keep the initiative moving ahead.
8. **Exploit the power of positive feedback, recognition, and reward.** Provide positive reinforcement to shape the behaviors that you want team members to exhibit. Positive reinforcement can take many forms and be public or private. Possibilities include a day off, or a certificate of commendation for a job well done.

¹ Katzenbach and Smith, “The Wisdom of Teams,” McKinsey and Company, Inc., 1994

Whatever mechanism is used, it must be one that is valued by the recipient and culture.

9. ▶▶▶ **Conducting a Team Meeting**

One way to improve the productivity of teams is to run productive team meetings. Here are 10 tips that should be followed to make a meeting more effective and efficient.

1. **Prepare a meeting agenda.** An agenda serves to define the purpose of the meeting. It should include: who will attend the meeting, what, if any, preparation is required of each participant, a listing of items to be covered, meeting start and ending times, and the meeting location.
2. **Distribute the agenda in advance.** Distribute the agenda at least a three days before the meeting to allow participants to prepare for it. Allow more time if there is a substantial amount of preparation required.
3. **Confirm participants responsible for agenda items.** At least one or two days before the meeting, contact individuals who have responsibility for various agenda items to ensure they will be prepared.
4. **Encourage participants to review the agenda.** At the start of the meeting, review the agenda, make any adjustments that might be required, and set time parameters for each agenda item.
5. **Establish and maintain specific time parameters.** Use good time management procedures to ensure the meeting begins and ends on time. Manage the time devoted to each agenda item to ensure each agenda item is discussed.
6. **Maintain focused discussion.** Where necessary, manage interruptions in irrelevant comments to keep discussion focused on the issues. Ensure assignments are made for work to be accomplished before the next meeting.
7. **Encourage and support participation of all members.** Monitor the discussion during meetings to ensure everyone has the ability to contribute. Use non-threatening techniques to draw out quiet or reserved participants and curtail those who might monopolize the discussion. Make sure task and responsibilities are distributed among all members to avoid undue burden on some.
8. **Encourage the clash of ideas.** Encourage people to share their points of view, critical thinking, and constructive disagreements.
9. **Discourage the clash of personalities.** Don't allow personal attacks or other insults.

10. **Bring proper closure.** Close a meeting by summarizing the group's decisions and accomplishments, assigning follow-up assignments, scheduling the next meeting, and preparing its agenda.

▶▶▶ Team Decision Making Phenomena

There are several phenomena that influence decision making in groups. One of the most common is known as groupthink.

Groupthink

Groupthink is a common team phenomenon. Because group members develop a sense of camaraderie, there is a strong desire to conform. This desire to conform overrides the realistic analysis of alternative options and the expression by team members of what might be minority or unpopular views. Some symptoms of groupthink include:

- ◆ Members hold onto initial assumptions that were made by the group no matter how strong the evidence might be to contradict it
- ◆ Members do not question a leader's direction or conclusion, even when it would be appropriate or correct to do so – they adopt a “yes, boss” mentality
- ◆ Members apply pressure to those who might express doubts about the group's shared view or who question the alternative favored by the majority
- ◆ Members who have doubts or differing points of view avoid deviating from what appears to be the group consensus by keeping silent about misgivings and even minimizing to themselves the importance of their doubts
- ◆ There appears to be an illusion of unanimity. If someone doesn't speak against an idea the group assumes that he or she is in agreement

Breaking a complex problem into simple parts

When dealing with a complex problem it is common to want to reduce the problem into parts that are more easily understood. This is because it takes much more mental effort to assimilate all of the information necessary to understand the problem in full. A downside of this phenomenon is that breaking a problem into smaller parts may lead to solving only that part of the problem, not the entire problem.¹

Good enough is good enough

When considering solutions to a problem, decision makers may face a large number of choices. They may review them only until they identify a choice that is satisfactory rather than considering all the alternatives. This differs from finding the “optimum” solution, but may be “good enough” to serve their needs.

¹ Fobbins, S.P. (1998). *Organizational Behavior*, 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Exercise: Overcoming Team Decision Making Phenomena

Directions: In a large group setting, conduct a force field analysis of strategies that could be used to help overcome group decision-making phenomena such as group think. Use the space provided below to copy the diagram created by the class.

Exercise: Characteristics of Good Team Members

Directions: On an individual basis, read each of the team member characteristics listed below. Select ten that best describe what it takes to be a good team member (there are no right answers). Once you've selected the ten most important characteristics, form groups of 3 to 4 people and discuss your selections. Reach a consensus of the ten most important characteristics and report your ideas to the class.

Characteristics of Good Team Members²

Makes decisions quickly	Is willing to take chances
Accepts criticism	Avoids cliques
Delegates well	Has good judgment
Foresees problems	Is assertive
Is people oriented	Cares about people
Is creative	Has high personal goals
Is punctual	Is able to influence others
Is an idealist	Is task oriented
Is good at synthesizing ideas	Seeks ideas from others
Is self motivated	Has good self-control
Is a good planner	Is a good listener
Is goal oriented	Is a realist
Thanks people often	Is friendly
Socializes	Lets others offer solutions
Is firm	Is considerate of others
Is modest	Is self-confident

² Adapted from WARMUPS FOR MEETING LEADERS. Sue Bianchi, Jan Butler, and David Richey. San Diego, California: University Associates, 1990.

MODULE 12: EXERCISES FOR HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS

Module Introduction

Module 10 introduced the idea that in order to become a high performing team, team members must spend time together, both in planned and unplanned activities. One type of planned activities is the team-building exercise. In this module you'll participate in a team building exercise that asks you to reflect upon concepts you've learned thus far in the course.

Module Objectives

- ◆ Participate in an experience that creates a sense of teamwork among group members
- ◆ Participate in an experience that encourages creative thinking
- ◆ Reflect upon concepts that have been discussed thus far in class
- ◆ Identify the important elements of a team building exercise

▶▶▶ **Department X-Y-Z (Team-Building Exercise)¹**

You and the other members of your team have been assigned to a new department in a health center to focus on some aspect of quality improvement discussed this week in training. Using the acronym that your team has been assigned, create a name for your health center department (The name must match the letters of the acronym). Then, with the other members of your group, determine the mission and objectives of the new health center department. Once you've determined the mission and objectives, identify some of the activities the health center department will perform and the various job positions within the group.

Be prepared to report to the rest of the class the name of your department, its mission, objectives, activities, and job positions. Have fun and be creative.

¹ Adapted from THE BIG BOOK OF TEAM BUILDING GAMES. John Newstrom and Edward Scannell. New York: McGraw Hill, 1998.

▶ ▶ ▶ Elements of Team Building Exercises

In order to become high performing, teams must spend time together. While much of the time is, and should be, dedicated to project work, it is also important for team members to have fun together, determine how to best interact with one another, and build a sense of camaraderie. Team-building exercises are useful in helping individual contributors function as a cohesive team. Team-building exercises are often designed to do the following:

- ◆ Help the team clarify its values
- ◆ Show team members how to give feedback in non-threatening ways
- ◆ Help team members differentiate and understand their roles and responsibilities
- ◆ Improve relationships among team members
- ◆ Help teams interact with individuals outside the group and with other teams
- ◆ Practice using various problem solving and decision making techniques
- ◆ Improve team functioning, including the facilitation of meetings and the delegation of responsibilities
- ◆ Create (in the team members) a sense of responsibility to the team
- ◆ Help the team think creatively
- ◆ Create a feeling of empowerment among team members

MODULE 13: FOCUS ON THE CLIENT

Module Introduction

“Client Focus” is the fourth and final principle of quality assurance to be discussed. In this module you will learn that there are two types of customers that should be considered: “external customers” and “internal customers.” Other principles of quality assurance discussed thus far are: understanding work as processes and systems, testing change and emphasizing the use of data, and teamwork.

Module Objectives

At the end of this module, you should be able to:

- ◆ State that client focus is one of the four principles of quality assurance
- ◆ Explain why it is important to understand clients’ needs
- ◆ Explain the difference between external and internal clients
- ◆ Identify several individuals or departments that are your internal clients
- ◆ Identify several individuals or departments of whom you are an internal client

▶▶▶ Client Focus

Client focus is one of the four principles of quality improvement. Other principles include understanding work as processes and systems, testing changes and emphasizing the use of data, and teamwork. The four principles of quality improvement were introduced in Module 5. Each is briefly described in the table below.

The Four Principles of Quality Assurance	
◆	<p>Client focus Services should be designed so as to meet the needs and expectations of clients and community.</p>
◆	<p>Understanding work as processes and systems Providers must understand the service system and its key service processes in order to improve them.</p>
◆	<p>Testing changes and emphasizing the use of data Changes are tested in order to determine whether they yield the required improvement. Data are used to analyze processes, identify problems, and to determine whether the changes have resulted in improvement.</p>
◆	<p>Teamwork Improvement is achieved through the team approach to problem solving and quality improvement.</p>

The quality principle of “Client Focus” reminds us that services should be designed to meet the needs and expectations of clients and community. A client focus can be achieved by gathering information about clients and then designing services to meet the needs that are identified. When health facilities meet or exceed its clients’ expectations those clients often return and recommend the health facility to others. The “Dimensions of Quality” reviewed in Module 3 are useful in understanding how health service quality can be achieved.

▶▶▶ **External and Internal Clients**

In any healthcare facility there are two types of clients: external clients and internal clients. External clients are individuals that come to the facility to receive services. Internal clients are individuals involved in the delivery of care, and may include doctors, nurses, administration, cleaning staff, food service personnel, and so on. An internal client involves a relationship of supplier-customer. For example, if a physician orders a lab test, the physician is a customer of the laboratory technician who performs the test and supplies the results.

To provide the utmost in healthcare services a focus must be placed not only on the needs of the clients that come to a facility to receive services (external clients), but also on the work related needs of personnel involved in the delivery of care (internal clients). When a focus is placed on internal clients, those personnel are better able to perform their jobs and ultimately better able to meet the needs of external clients.

Notes:

Exercise: Internal Client Identification

Directions: In the space provided below, identify the internal clients within your facility and the service or product that you provide them.

Person(s) or Department	Product or Service You Provide
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Directions: In the space provided below, select two clients to contact when you return to your facility to determine how you can better meet their needs and make their work more effective and efficient.

1. _____

2. _____

Exercise: Supplier / Provider Identification

Directions: In the space provided below, identify the individuals or departments within your facility of whom you are a customer

Person(s) or Department	Product or Service You Are Provided
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Directions: In the space provided below, select two providers or suppliers to contact when you return to your facility to discuss if it might be possible to work together to alter a product or service to make your work more effective and efficient.

1. _____
2. _____

MODULE 14: GAINING CLIENT FEEDBACK

Module Introduction

One of the four principles of quality improvement is “Client Focus.” This module focuses on three techniques that will help you learn more about the perspective of customers: questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, and provide some basic information on their use.

Module Objectives

- ◆ Explain why it is important to solicit feedback from clients (internal and external) in relation to meeting their needs and expectations
- ◆ Identify possible methods for gathering feedback of clients and explain the strengths and limitations of each
- ◆ Explain important points to keep in mind when using a written questionnaire or survey to solicit feedback and information from clients
- ◆ Discuss important points to take into consideration when using interviews to solicit feedback and information from clients
- ◆ Explain the difference between forced choice and open-ended questions and the value of each

►►► Techniques for Gaining Client Feedback

Before it is possible to meet the needs and expectations of clients and the community, it is important to understand their perspectives. There are a variety of techniques that can be used to help you do this. This module focuses on three: questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Each is briefly described below.

- ◆ **Questionnaires.** A questionnaire is typically a text-based instrument that collects data from clients by asking questions in a standardized fashion. Respondents record a written response to each questionnaire item. Respondents also have control over the completion of the questionnaire—they can answer it at their convenience, they can skip questions, they can fill it out in any order, and they can give responses other than the preferred standard (e.g., assign a ten on a five-point scale).
- ◆ **Interviews.** An interview consists of questions posed orally by an interviewer and answered orally by the respondent. An interviewee's responses are typically recorded on an audiotape or handwritten by the interviewer. The interviewer is usually in more control of an interview situation: they can control the pace and sequence of questions, they can ask follow up questions, and they can modify and clarify questions that respondents might not at first understand.
- ◆ **Focus groups.** A focus group is a group assembled specifically to focus on a topic, client experience, or an issue. Focus groups are widely used by marketing professionals to find out what customers like and dislike about a company's product or service and why they purchase one product or service in lieu of another. Focus groups usually consist of between seven to twelve people that are familiar with a product or service and have opinions or attitudes about that product or service. They are facilitated by a highly trained moderator and typically run between one and two hours.

The type of information that can be gathered from clients is limited. For example, clients are usually not the best source of data for technical questions on quality of care because they do not have technical (medical) knowledge necessary to judge certain elements of care. However, if the questions are phrased carefully, the client can tell you about technical quality. For example, if the standard of care is that of a patient at risk for pregnancy-induced hypertension (PIH) will have her blood pressure (BP) checked at each prenatal visit, then a question could be crafted in the following manner: "Did your blood pressure get checked today?" Although the client could not tell you if her BP was checked or recorded accurately, she can tell you whether the measurement was taken. In fact, there are many things clients can tell you. For example, they can tell you if they have been educated or informed about some element of their care. Some other aspects of quality for which external clients are a good source of information relate to issues of access (including times clinic is open, types of services available, choice), continuity, amenities, interpersonal communication and counseling, respect, courtesy, trust, and privacy. Be aware that bias can be introduced into your survey. For example,

one type of bias is called “courtesy bias.” This can be introduced if a service provider is interviewing a client about services at a facility. A client may hesitate to give truthful responses if they could be perceived as critical of the clinic or its providers.

Notes:

▶▶▶ Exercise: Selecting Among Techniques

Directions: In a large group setting, discuss when each approach might be more advantageous to use than the others. Write the ideas discussed in the space provided below.

Questionnaire	Interview	Focus Group

►►► **Creating and Administering Questionnaires**

There are six main steps involved in creating and administering questionnaires. They are: (1) determine the questionnaire purpose, (2) identify questionnaire respondents, (3) create the questionnaire and data collection tools, (4) pilot the questionnaire, (5) distribute the questionnaire, (6) analyze and report data. Each step is described below.

1. Determine the questionnaire purpose.

The first step in creating a questionnaire is determining your purpose for conducting it. The purpose will determine the content and format of the questions that you ask. To elaborate, some questions might be better asked by asking forced choice questions (pre-defined options) while others might be better asked by asking open-ended questions (free text answers). This is also the time to think about how you will want to analyze the data collected.

2. Identify questionnaire respondents.

The next step in creating a questionnaire is to determine who you want to complete it. Depending on the purpose of the questionnaire you might want to randomly select clients to ensure that all client perspectives are represented, while at other times you might want to focus in on a specific audience.

3. Create the questionnaire.

Tell people why you need the information and what you will do with it. It's important to create a questionnaire that respondents will find desirable to complete. It must be as short as possible (don't ask more questions than required), be well organized, ask non-threatening questions, include brief and clear instructions, and be easy to read. It should also be attractive looking to encourage respondents to complete it, and should include both forced choice and open-ended questions. Finally, it will be important to tell people that you will protect the anonymity of respondents, and do so. If you do not need a name, do not ask for one.

4. Pilot the questionnaire.

Prior to administering a questionnaire, it's important to pilot it with a small sample of individuals that will be asked to complete it. A pilot will not only help you refine the questions and the format of the questionnaire to make it more user-friendly, but it will also provide you with a glimpse of the data that you will collect. This feedback will help you determine if you should change the format of some questions (forced choice vs. open ended) or the pre-defined options of forced choice questions. During the pilot you will also want to test your plan for analyzing the data.

5. Distribute the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Best Practices

- ◆ Begin the questionnaire with easy and non-threatening questions to reduce respondents' anxiety.
- ◆ Make questions as brief as possible. Shorter, easier to complete questionnaires have a higher rate of return than longer verbose questionnaires.
- ◆ Change the question format to retain interest in completing the questionnaire. Also, group questions according to their topic and format, making the survey more logical to the respondent.
- ◆ Leave adequate space for respondents to make comments. Even in forced choice questionnaires, respondents often feel the need to communicate more information than asked for.
- ◆ Be clear about how to return the completed questionnaire. If it is to be mailed, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to facilitate mailing on the part of the respondent.
- ◆ Provide for and communicate how respondents' anonymity will be maintained. In some studies this will be more important than in others; however, it is important to communicate that you will hold responses confidentially.
- ◆ Write a cover letter that communicates the importance of responses and how the data will be used, and why the respondent was selected. Make the letter as personal as possible, perhaps by including the respondent's name in the form letter.
- ◆ Put the most important questions toward the beginning of the questionnaire and the least important toward the end. Questions at the end get less attention than those at the beginning.
- ◆ Make the questionnaire professional looking. Professional looking questionnaires have a higher return rate than unprofessional looking questionnaires.
- ◆ Collect the demographic information, (e.g., age, gender, residence), so that data can be analyzed by segments of the community. Collect information that is needed for your purposes, but do not collect more.
- ◆ Avoid using questions or statements that are negatively worded, as they are confusing to read and often suggest an attitude or opinion.

►►► Planning and Conducting Interviews

The steps used to plan for and conduct interviews are similar in nature to those involved in creating and administering a questionnaire. They are: (1) determine the interview purpose, (2) identify interview respondents, (3) determine the interview format, (4) develop interview protocol, (5) prepare interviewers and conduct pilot interviews, (6) conduct the interview, (7) analyze and report data. Each is briefly described below.

1. *Determine the interview purpose.*

The first step in planning for and conducting interviews is to determine why you want to conduct it. Similar to creating a questionnaire, many decisions about the interview process and content are hinged upon the purpose of the interview—including the people that will be interviewed, the format of the interview, and the questions that are asked.

2. *Identify interview respondents.*

The second step in planning for and conducting interviews is to identify whom you want to interview. The purpose of your interview will drive the decision regarding who should be interviewed. Key informants are individuals who have unique knowledge of the situation; you might think of them as subject matter experts.

3. *Determine the interview technique.*

There are several different ways that interviews can be conducted. To begin, interviews can be conducted in person or by phone. Interviews can also be designed so they are highly structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Highly structured interviews ask forced-choice questions and are similar in nature to posing questions from a questionnaire; semi-structured interviews involve asking pre-determined questions and probing using open-ended questions to obtain additional information. Unstructured interviews do not use a detailed interview guide but allows interviewers the opportunity to gradually lead the respondent to the desired information. This type of interview is often conducted surrounding sensitive or difficult topics or issues, and requires a great deal of skill on the interviewers' part. Interviews can also be conducted in a group setting. Sometimes a relative or friend can add important details or insight about the issue being discussed.

4. *Develop interview protocol.*

An interview protocol describes both the interview process and the questions that will be asked during the interview. It is often divided into three sections—interview introduction, body of interview, and interview conclusion. The interview introduction details how the interviewer should begin the interview, and identifies background information about the study to share with the respondent. The body of the interview contains the actual questions to be asked during the interview. During the closing of the interview, the interviewer should thank the respondent for his or her time, set up any second interview that might be necessary, and provide the respondent with his or her contact information.

5. *Prepare interviewers and conduct pilot interviews.*

If several people will be responsible for conducting interviews, it will be necessary to train them how to do so. Once several interviewers are trained it is important to conduct pilot interviews to ensure the interview protocol collects the desired data and to ensure interviewers understand how to conduct the interviews according to the protocol.

6. *Conduct the interview.*

There's more to interviewing than asking questions and recording responses. Interviewers must be able to establish rapport with the respondents, create a safe environment for the interview, present him or her in a professional manner, and be alert to nonverbal communication.

7. *Analyze and report data.*

Analysis of the data will depend upon the type of questions asked during the interview. If a forced choice question style interview style is used, data analysis will be similar to that used with forced choice questionnaires. If semi-structured or unstructured interview styles are used, data analysis and reporting will resemble the procedure used for open-ended questions.

Interview Best Practices

- ◆ Assure respondents that their confidentiality will be maintained and explain procedures that will be followed to do so.
- ◆ Explain the expected benefit of the information being gathered through interviews.
- ◆ Engage in small talk before beginning the interview to establish rapport with the respondent and help put him or her at ease.
- ◆ Ask questions of respondents using language that they can understand. Avoid the use of technical jargon or other words with which they might not be familiar.
- ◆ Don't be afraid of silence during the interview. Sometimes it takes respondents time to formulate their ideas.
- ◆ Try not to talk too much during the interview. The more time the respondent has to talk, the more information he or she will share.
- ◆ Be careful not to express your ideas or opinions either verbally or nonverbally by nodding or shaking your head.
- ◆ Don't dwell on a topic the respondent seems uncomfortable talking about. Move to a new topic and return later, phrasing questions in a different way.
- ◆ Don't ask leading questions that suggest how the respondent should feel about an issue, e.g., "Don't you think it would be a good policy to...?"
- ◆ Don't ask too many forced choice or open-ended questions in succession—rather mix the types of questions to maintain the flow of the interview.

►►► Types of Questions

There are two main types of questions: forced choice and open-ended questions. Forced choice questions ask the respondents to choose from a fixed set of responses. In contrast, open-ended questions do not provide a set of response options—rather the respondent creates a free form response.

Forced Choice Questions

Forced choice questions can take many formats. A few are provided below:

One Option: What is your marital status
 Single (never married)
 Married
 Divorced
 Widowed

One Option:
 (Interval Scale) How many times have you visited this facility before?
 This is my first visit
 2-5
 6-10
 11 or more times

Multiple Options: How did you learn about this maternity program? Check all that apply.
 Radio
 Television
 Newspaper
 Friend or Relative
 Poster / flyer in the Community
 Other, please specify

Ranked Options: Rank each statement in order of importance to you, with “1” being the most important and “5” the least important. Use each number only once.

To me, the most important aspect of a healthcare facility is...
 The friendliness of the staff
 The cleanliness of the facility
 The proximity to my home
 The prompt service I receive
 The comfort of the waiting room

Likert-type scale: The receptionist at the front desk was:
(Qualitative words) _____ Very friendly
 _____ Somewhat friendly
 _____ Neutral
 _____ Aloof
 _____ Very aloof

Likert-type scale: The waiting room was clean and comfortable.
 _____ Strongly agree
 _____ Agree
 _____ Neither agree nor disagree
 _____ Disagree
 _____ Strongly disagree

Open-ended Questions

In contrast to forced choice questions that ask the respondent to select from pre-determined options, open-ended questions ask the respondent to develop their own response. Open-ended questions often begin with the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how. Here are a few examples.

- How would you change the process to admit patients to the hospital?
- What suggestions do you have for decreasing waiting times in the clinic?
- How might we make it more convenient for you to visit the health center?
- Why are you visiting the clinic today?

Practice Questions

Use this space to write sample questions of your own.

▶▶▶ **Exercise: Always, Often, and Sometimes**

Directions: The instructor will read 13 words. After each word is read, specify a number between 0 and 100 that best indicates the percentage of time each word conveys to you. Once all the words are read and you've assigned values to each, you'll be given three minutes to change the scores you assigned. To do so simply cross out the old value and assign a new value. Then add up all the scores to arrive at a total.

Word	Percent	Changed percent
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		

TOTAL _____

▶▶▶ Planning and Facilitating Focus Groups

Focus groups are often used by organizations to determine how customers feel about a product or service so that they can determine the best way to market it. The technique can also be used in healthcare settings, to focus on important issues and services, but requires a person skilled at facilitation. The basic steps entailed in planning and facilitating a focus group are similar to those used to conduct interviews and administer questionnaires—with one exception—the focus group event is routinely tape recorded and the recordings transcribed for analysis. The steps used to plan and facilitate focus groups are:

1. Determine the goal of the focus group
2. Identify the focus group members
3. Develop the interview guide
4. Conduct the focus group
5. Transcribe the group's output
6. Analyze and report the data

Notes:
