

# OVERVIEW OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT



## INTRODUCTION:

- What is Quality Improvement?
- What is the Difference Between QI and QA?
- The Quality Improvement Approach
- RESOURCES

### What is Quality Improvement?

**Quality improvement**, or QI (also known as continuous quality improvement, quality management), **is an organizational approach to managing and improving the systems that support the work of an organization.** It focuses on creating system-level changes so that the organization’s work meets or exceeds the needs and expectations of everyone who depends on that work.

Process and system thinking is critical to QI. All work of any kind is regarded as a process; a series of related activities or tasks aimed at producing a particular outcome. Everything that we do in health care involves processes, whether they are the defined steps in making an appointment or the multiple steps in managing the more complex needs of a person with cardiovascular disease.

QI is all about continuous improvement, a never-ending quest to improve processes by identifying root causes of problems. Process improvement involves making gradual improvements in everyday processes to reduce variation and redundancies, improve quality of services, and increase customer satisfaction.

### What is the Difference Between QI and QA?

**There is often confusion about the difference between Quality Improvement (QI) and Quality Assurance (QA).**

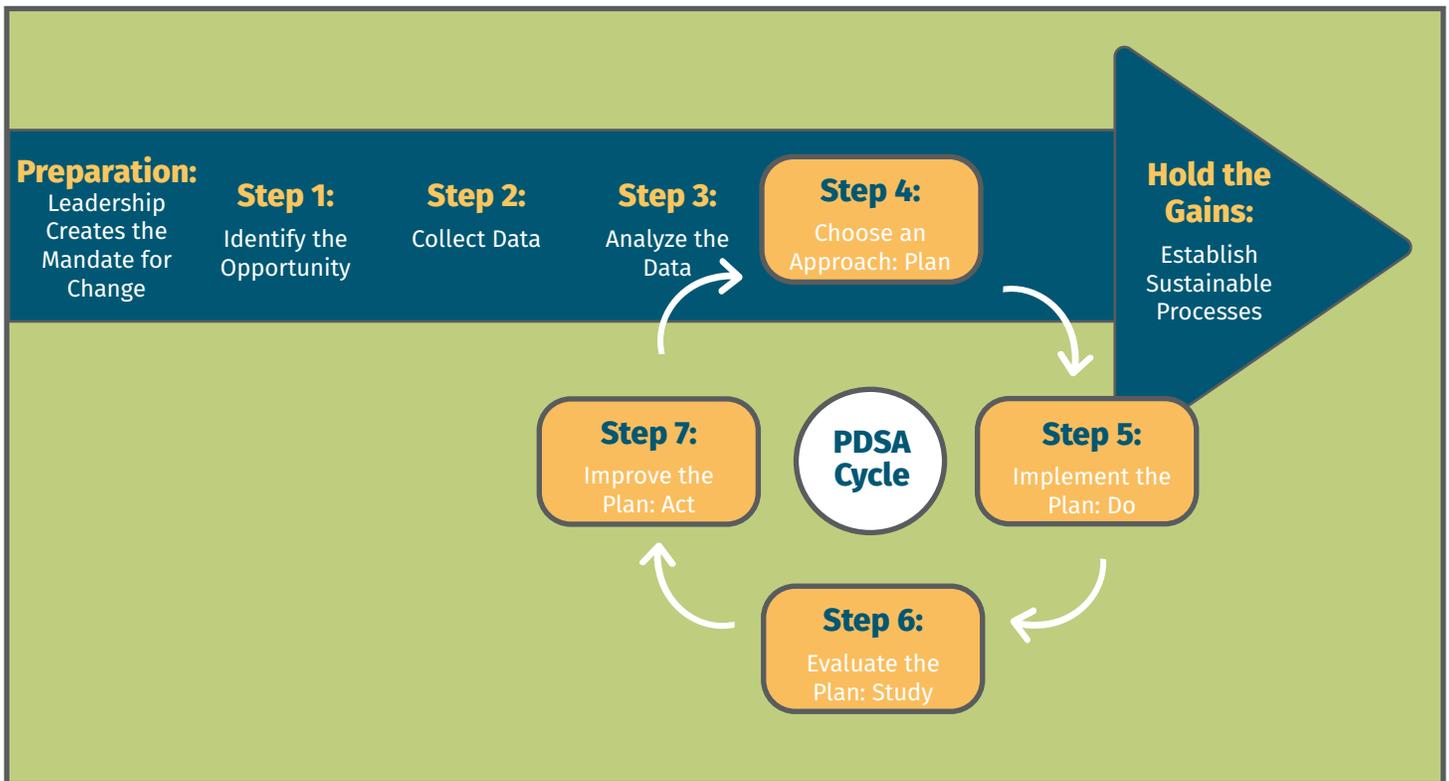
*Here are some distinguishing factors:*

Quality Improvement	Quality Assurance
Proactive, thinking about ongoing processes in place and how to make measurable improvements.	Reactive, going back to check on how things had been done.
Signals the organization’s desire to operate in a culture of always improving.	Often results from regulation.
Deliberately involves staff at all levels.	Managers typically take the lead.
Ongoing effort.	Done on a periodic, scheduled basis.
Works to exceed expectations - always setting the bar higher.	Operates on a pass/fail basis - either something was done correctly or not.

## The Quality Improvement Approach

*In this Toolkit, we will describe the Quality Improvement Approach using the following steps, also shown in the figure:*

- **Preparation:** Leadership Creates the Mandate for Change
- **Step 1:** Identify the Opportunity
- **Step 2:** Collect Data
- **Step 3:** Analyze the Data
- **Step 4:** Choose an Approach -- Plan
- **Step 5:** Implement the Plan -- Do
- **Step 6:** Evaluate the Plan – Study
- **Step 7:** Improve the Plan – Act
- **Hold the Gains:** Establish Sustainable Processes



## RESOURCES

### QI has its own terminology and a set of defining principles.

**Key QI principles and some definitions are provided in the following resources:**

#### Basics of Quality Improvement

From the American Academy of Family Practice

<https://www.aafp.org/practice-management/improvement/basics.html>

This page describes the basics of QI, including benefits, key concepts, and frameworks.

#### What is quality improvement and how can it transform healthcare?

Batalden, P.B. & Davidoff F. (2007). What is quality improvement and how can it transform healthcare. *Qual Saf Health Care*, 16(1):2-3.

doi: <https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/qhc/16/1/2.full.pdf>

This editorial published in *Quality and Safety in Health Care* defines QI and describes tools and methods for implementing it.

#### Practice Facilitation Handbook Module 4. Approaches to Quality Improvement

From the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/prevention-chronic-care/improve/system/pfhandbook/mod4.html>

This module gives an overview of the 14 Deming principles, which focus on underlying processes as the primary source of error and variation, and describes a model for process improvement.

#### Five Deming Principles That Help Healthcare Process Improvement

From Health Catalyst

Article: <https://www.healthcatalyst.com/insights/5-Deming-Principles-For-Healthcare-Process-Improvement>

Infographic: <https://downloads.healthcatalyst.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Five-Deming-Principles-help-process-improvement.png>

This page and infographic describe how five of the fourteen Deming principles apply to healthcare process improvement.