{Closed Caption} Using Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to Create Your Perfect Juvenile Drug Treatment Court
Event Started: 4/19/2017 1:17:26 PM ET

Please stand by for real time captions.

Good morning or afternoon depending on where you are at. Today we are going to be talking about continuous quality improvement. It's a data presentation but I am hoping that we can take concept of data and continuous quality improvement and make it into something that is going to make sense for you in your everyday lives and your courts. Make it something that you're excited to do and looking forward to collect data, analyzing it and making changes based on it.

I always tell folks that I am not a researcher. I know that we have a couple of researchers on the webinar. I am not an evaluator. I am an adult educator by training and it's my job to take all of those things that the researchers and evaluators tells us and figure out what that means for real life. How does that work in real life setting? How can we use that to improve processing for courts around the country? And how can we make it easy for everyone to keep doing your very long and hard jobs and look at data and say how we can use data to make changes to our program?

Our goal is to look at how this information you collect can be useful to you in making changes. If you add new things, how you can use it to make sure you are on the right track.

I should tell you that the points of view expressed today do represent myself but not necessarily the official positions or policies of anyone in our federal government.

Today, we are going to discuss different ways to use data. We are going to describe how data can help you tell your story. We are going to identify challenges that you can use this information to help you solve and we are going to review how to set performance measures for your program. So a little bit of everything and all of that rolled up together can lead us to continuous quality improvement.

The idea of this webinar is that you are never going to be perfect and that there is always going to be times and opportunities to improve. We want you to always keep pushing to improve what you are doing.

I've got to tell you, and some of you have heard me say this before, I am a really big fan of the work that you do in juvenile drug treatment courts. This is hard work that you do. And I know that there is a lot that you already have on your plate.

So again, I want to make this as easy for you as I can but I also want to make sure that you are doing the best job that you can because I know that you care very much about these youths and families in your program. So how can we make your programs the very best programs that they can be.

Continuously quality improvement can sometimes feel a little bit daunting. And I will always encourage you to if you have the opportunity to work with an outside evaluator. They are going to use terms such as comparison groups, experimental outputs, regression, long-term, boot straps, outcomes, short-term, mean, quasi-experimental. But it really all comes down to this - this is what I mean when I say continuous quality improvement: knowing that you are doing what you said you would do. That is continuous quality improvement and that is the premise that we have today.

For example, if you think that your program is 9-12 months but no youth graduate in 9-12 months that means that you are not doing what you said you would do. So you go to make a change. And maybe it's that you tell people it's not a 9-12 month program, it's actually a 12 to 14 month program and that's fine. Or maybe you change something that's happening in your program to make it match. So that if there's a chance to get done in 9 months you actually have youth that do get done in 9 months. It's knowing that you are doing what you said you would do.

It's an approach that this is an idea that everyone on the team has a piece of this and that you are looking at process. We know that our youth are more successful in our juvenile drug treatment court programs when the program has a process and policies that they follow. We know that from the research and we know that from the new juvenile drug treatment court guidelines. You need to have a process and you need to stick to it. That means that you stick to your target population. You don't take kids that don't fit your target population. That you stick to your goals for the youth and you stick to what you said you would do.

It's data driven. You are collecting information about what you are doing and continually looking at it and making sure that you are doing what you said that you would do. And if you are not, you are making changes and tracking to see how those changes work. And again we are driven by the assumption that there is always room for improvement.

I like to call this good, better, and best. Your program might be good but it could probably get better. And then it might even end up being the very best program it can be. This is the idea that you all want to have the very best programs you can have. So how do you get there? This is not a one-time event and you will always be continuously improving quality.

Let's talk about good, better, and best. I have used target population as an example. If you have a good target population and I come out to your court and I'm going to work with you I am going to think you have a good target population if it's written down.

And if your referral sources know who the target population is; that's a good foundation to build on. But I am going to ask you to get better so if you start with that that's great but better means that you have data driven qualifiers and disqualifiers.

We are really pushing for these data qualifiers and disqualifiers which mean that you are using risk need instruments and substance use assessment instruments to determine who those youth are that are coming into your program.

So that is a better target population that it's written down, but now you have data driven qualifiers and disqualifiers. Your target population says that they have to be moderate to high risk, they have a substance use disorder, and they fit your age profile. Those are data driven qualifiers and disqualifiers.

And I will ask you if you want to get better at your target population, not only do you give your referral sources your target but that you will actually go out and train them. You will talk to them about it and make sure they know who you are looking for.

And the third thing that makes your target population a better population is that it matches up with what you have in your community. Your services match your target.

Now the very best target population policy, is one where the team will only accept you if it meets the target population as defined by the data driven elements.

And that you will monitor that. You will check and make sure that you are not making a lot of exceptions. Teams always ask me, they say what if there are some kids that are there on the borderline between being accepted and not -- like maybe just listed six things -- and there is one element that isn't quite right yet.

And I tell teams that you can accept those youth into your program but you should track it. And if you keep making that same exception over and over and over again, then you probably just need to change what your target population says to match that exception that you keep making.

That is what we mean by continuing quality improvement.

You're just really having that sort of meta-look at your program on a regular basis and saying is everything still matching up? Do we still think we are doing what we said we were going to do? Are we comfortable with where we are at? And if not, what changes are we making?

So why aren't you continuously improving quality? I am going to put up a poll. I want to find out how you would describe your relationships to data.

Wow, I think we have some ringers in the audience today. Can you broadcast the results?

So you can see there are a number of you that love data. Nobody says they hate it. But I think it is a pretty legit response. If this is a world that you work in, then being frustrated or confused or even feeling kind of mad about it, makes sense but I have some tricks that you can use to get more comfortable with it, and to get better at it.

Sometimes it can feel like this -- that you are too busy. Everybody has about 48 jobs already. Because I know that juvenile drug treatment court is not the only docket that you have if you are a judge. It's probably not the only caseload that you have if you are a probation officer. Sometimes coordinators are lucky where this is their only job, but a lot of times it is not, and even if you are a coordinator, you are wearing all the hats of the juvenile drug treatment court and you are often the one called upon to do most of this analysis with data.

And so it can feel like this -- you can feel like you are these Lego people and it takes too much time to switchover to put the round wheels on. You will just keep doing what you're doing.

Or maybe it can feel a little bit scary, and I have a little video clip I want to show you here.

[Video clip from The Simpsons – The Treehouse of Terror begin at 0:21/1:56 and end at 1:14/1:56 https://youtu.be/DzrTP-rCoqc]

Homie? What he has typed will be a window into his madness. Feelin' fine. Wow, that's a relief.

This is less encouraging.

Aaaaah.

What do you think, Marge? All I need is a title. I was thinking along the lines of "No TV and No Beer Make Homer Something Something…"

Go crazy?

Don't mind if I do!

[End video clip from The Simpsons – The Treehouse of Terror begin at 0:21/1:56 and end at 1:14/1:56 https://youtu.be/DzrTP-rCoqc]

So sometimes it can feel a little bit like that -- if you look at what is written, you might find something you don't want to know. If you think about your program, a lot of times you are really -- you are committed, you are invested. So I think the term that I hear used from the folks in El Paso, Texas is, "Nobody wants to hear their baby is ugly." If you take a look at your data, it might tell you that parts of your baby is ugly. And that is useful, even though it might be scary to find out that you are not doing things quite right. Maybe you're using detention more than what is recommended. Maybe you're taking kids that are lower risk, and that's not necessarily a great thing to do. There are those things that you can find out something like "Oh, this is not great - we are really going to make a change here." And that can make you feel bad and that can be scary but it is important to kind to rip that Band-Aid off and be ready to make the changes because again, you want to have the best program you can have.

Or it can feel like this -- for those of you who are entering things into a statewide system, and then maybe not able to get any information back out, it can feel like this, where it's get all the information you can and we'll think of a use for it later.

You might be collecting everything under the sun. But it might not ever be any back. You might not ever have a chance to take a look at it.

So that can feel frustrating. That you have collected all this information, but it's not doing anything to improve how you actually work and it just feels like a chore.

So the whole point of this presentation is we don't want to be like that. We want it to be different. We want it to be fun. Please bring up my example of fun.

[Video clip from Peewee's Playhouse (1:10) - https://youtu.be/gxMZgeBlqzQ]

What's that?

What's today's secret word?

That's an interesting question. Let's go and ask Kunk E.

[Laughter] [Clapping]

Kunk E 3000. Ready to assist you, Peewee.

Good morning Kunk E. What's today's secret word?

Today's secret word is fun. Now you all remember what to do whenever anyone says the secret word, right?

Scream!

That is so correct. For the rest of the day whenever anyone says the secret word today, everyone scream really loud.

Ready? Let's try it. Hey how's it going?

I'm having fun.

Scream!

You look like you are having fun.

Scream!

Yes, I am having fun!

Scream!

Great work everybody. Really fun!

Scream!

[End video clip from Peewee's Playhouse (1:10) - https://youtu.be/gxMZgeBlqzQ]

All right so as I go through the presentation every time I say the word data which is today's secret word, scream a little bit to yourself. Right? It can be fun to do this. It's like putting together a puzzle. Solving a logic problem is those things where we can use the brains in different way. So think about this as an exercise that can be intellectually stimulating.

But I know that there are barriers. Right -- that you have lots of stuff going on. You don't know what you have or where to find it. And you don't know what you need. Or maybe you have been operating for a long time. I see in the list of participants that I see a lot of you are in programs that have operated for a number of years. So you can feel like you can start analyzing and collecting data now but isn't it a little late to do that? And of course the last one -- that we are not researchers, that's not our job. But I will encourage you to get an outside evaluator and also to use data to make changes to your own process. And really we do this all the time. We are a data driven culture now.

We talk about data a lot in our own lives and we have lots of things, lots of machines and things to keep track of stuff about our lives and we analyze that and we make changes based on that.

Let's show about the Fit Bit video.

It is taking a minute for our video to come up. This is one of the Fit Bit commercials that we are going to see. And you can see that always in our daily lives we are collecting and analyzing data.

[Video clip from Fitbit Charge 2 – Big Day (0:30) - https://youtu.be/bW5ihFg-5iQ]

[Music Playing] Come on dad.

[Music Playing] You ready dad.

[End video clip from Fitbit Charge 2 – Big Day (0:30) - https://youtu.be/bW5ihFg-5iQ]

What I like about this ad, it really touches on all of the different things we're talking about when we talk about continuous quality improvement. Because what we are talking about is collecting data. You guys probably do that already. But then you need to analyze it and you need to react.

So you can imagine that I will assume father and daughter in this fit bit commercial set a goal getting in shape for her wedding. They had a goal they were working for, and they had probably some bench marks, maybe running up the staircase without getting out of breath or needing to take a break. That might have been a benchmark. You can imagine that they were collecting their data and analyzing it and then they were reacting to it. And so we are doing this in our everyday lives.

If you bought a car lately, you collected the data, you analyze and you reacted. Buying a car means you have to pick the make, the model, the price range you are looking for, and then all of those features, right -- you can get million different features in your car. But you have to find the best combination of make, model, price and features. And sometimes you're going to discard a feature if price is the most important thing to you. So that you in your regular life, collecting data, analyzing it and reacting.

And of course you don't continuously buy cars, right, that's not a continuous cycle because once you have reacted you probably have a break before you have to do the car buying process again. When we're talking about this work in the court, we want you to keep doing this. We want you to keep collecting, analyzing and reacting -- that there's never going to be perfect -- but you will always be willing to get to the best.

All right so I want to know how you define success. So if you can write in the chat some of the ways you define success.

Goals are met. Absolutely. That's a yes. We succeeded in doing what we wanted to do and the young people have succeeded in meeting the goals they set for themselves with help from the program.

Long-term behavior changes. Yes. Long-term behavior changes are kind of our ideal outcome.

Identifiable improvements.

Youth meet goals, graduation, reduce recidivism.

Clean drug screens. Absolutely.

Changes in negative behavior.

Low recidivism rates.

Improvement at school, improved family functioning. Yes, those are things where you are defining success, but sometimes it's a little bit tricky to measure those things, especially family improvement or improvement in behavior. And so I'm going to suggest you though, that we can measure some of those things, and we can track it. And we can use that information to talk about how your program works and how you do.

Well, Dorcas had a very complete thing here -- resilience based goals met or succeeded inclusive of developmental assets acquirements. Family strengths increases, grades etc. In a couple things that you guys have touched on here, indicate that reassessment is important. We want to be able to measure change as they go through the program.

And so we define success as improved grades. Well how will we know if grades have improved? We need to monitor that, we need to collect that data, and then we need to check and see if things are changing.

We can do that with things like criminal behavior with the risk and need factors and with substance use as well. So you should be thinking about with your program doing reassessment on a regular basis.

Depending on, of course, what finances will allow.

Ideally you could be doing reassessments at three months, six months, nine month, 12 months that will help you see if there are changes. And hopefully as you move through your program, their risk level will go down, their needs will start to be met. And their substance use disorder will change as well. Their diagnosis will change. Those things should all changes as youth go through the program. But if you are not reassessing you cannot know that.

So think about how you define success and how you can track it and how you can measure it. So you can say to people things like this. Data can help you tell your story. You can say, "79% of youth in the program improve their grades." If you are keeping track of young people's grades while they are in your program, and you can see a measurable change between when they start and when they leave. So young Trevor starts and he has a D in all this classes, and when he leaves he has an average of a C. That is an improvement in grades and that something you can count and report.

"83% of the parents report better behavior at home." So this is a way for us to measure the family component -- improved functioning with their family. So we can say, "83% of the young people in our program have parents who are reporting better behavior at home."

And of course, this is not gold plated, gold standard data. So there is qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data are those things that are more for telling the story more than anything else. And this is qualitative data. This tells us based on maybe a survey you give to parents that 83% of the parents will say between the time they started the program and now when they are about to graduate, their behavior at home has improved.

You can give them some things to help clue them into improved behavior like doing chores, or not talking back, or being home by curfew. You know all those kinds of things. And you want set those and you want to figure out how to measure it.

Because then you can use that definition of success to help tell the story of your program.

There's a lot of places I go were folks tell me that they really feel frustrated. The only measures of success for the program are young people who are sober and don't recidivate.

But these are also measures of success. And I would encourage you to think about how you can measure these and how you can reflect that success back to the youth in your program. Because sometimes they can feel a little bit like, you know, it's a little bit of a drag to be in a juvenile drug court program. And so being able to show them the progress that they have made can sometimes be helpful.

Being able to tell your parents about the progress that the young people are making, and of course your community. So thinking about those measures of success and how you can reflect those back out to your community, to yourself, to your constituents. It is very, very important.

Another measure of success: how much money are you spending versus how much money would be spent on these young people if they were in the regular probation population?

If you could show a cost savings at your juvenile drug treatment court, that's a really great argument to continue to fund your program. So if you could say something like we save $2.11 per day for each youth in our program, that's a good thing.

So be thinking about success and how you can define success and how you can share success in a meaningful way.

And now for something completely different. So you now have seen over the course of this presentation that I am a classic Simpsons fan and a Monty Python fan. So I believe that should tell you basically everything you need to know about me.

Alright so, we are going to talk about data for just a minute. In Jessicaville, I always tell people I have this perfect juvenile drug treatment court that operates in my head. So from a theoretical standpoint, I have a perfect court. That doesn't have to come up against anything that happens in the real world. So I can talk about this from a theoretical standpoint all day. You all have to deal with real problems, but I, I have a theoretical construct. So in this theoretical program that I have though, I like to sometimes introduce problems. So it's a little bit like I'm playing Sim City with my pretend drug court. So in this particular program, in Jessicaville, we are still sending youth to detention regularly. They are going to detention for an average of 30 days during their time that they are in the juvenile drug court and the length of stay is generally about five days. So we start out with maybe those two days in detention, that weekend in detention, but by the time we kind of get to the third or fourth infraction we are sending them there for about five days at a time.

So that's it. That's our detention data from this program that is in my head.

So what can we infer from this data? Is it positive or negative data? And what decisions can we make? Well, that's a good question. Those are all good questions. So I would like you to write in chat, what can we infer from this data? Can you type out your guesses here?

We can make a guess about how much money we're spending on detention and whether or not we want to keep spending it.

Detention may not be used effectively since we're using it repeatedly. So we are not necessarily getting any effect from it.

Oh, and Colleen did the math and she thinks the kids are going to detention about every 30 days or so, which is about right.

So what needs aren't we addressing? Have we assessed them appropriately? Exactly -- there's a ton of stuff we could guess.

And then Harry jumps in with -- it is not positive or negative. Right? Data is just there.

That's what we think about -- like be being scared of what we might learn when we start to do this. There's nothing to be scared of because this is just information.

Something that is useful to us.

Right? So that's what we want to think about with that. This is how we react to it and what we decide to do. That is what's going to affect outcome.

Yes Teresa, it might be in our baseline to set a new objective. So decisions we can make, we might say that is a lot more detentions than we thought we were using.

And we want to use less detention.

So what are we going to do about that?

So we are going to set a baseline. We are going to say we don't want to send kids to detention for the first three dirty UAs. We will try to do something different for those first three positive tests. And then we are going to make a plan for what we will do instead. And then we will make a plan for when we will start to use detention and under what circumstances. But we are going to be deliberate and thoughtful about it, and then we will keep track so we can see we are making a change.

How effective can you be in a short period of time? Well, that's a good question and that's why we have to keep track of the stuff.

And take a look at it and meet regularly to talk about our data and what it's telling us.

So it can help us solve our problems. We just talked a little bit about the detention thing in my imaginary court but it can help us with all kinds of problems.

And I want you to think about this -- everything you need to know about CQI, you learned in fifth grade. You can do math to learn about percentages and you can also use fifth grade science to identify problems and solve them.

So we are going to learn about the scientific method.

[Pause]

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[Video clip from – Scientific Method Song Video begin at 0:00 and end at 0:50) - https://youtu.be/KIFz_-KzURY]

Scientific methods. Scientific methods. Scientific methods.

Scientific methods.

Scientific methods.

Scientific methods.

[End video clip from Scientific Method Song Video begin at 0:00 and end at 0:50 - https://youtu.be/KIFz_-KzURY]

First you make an observation of the world around. Take notes and record all the things that you found. And you ask a simple question, something that you want to learn, and you form a hypothesis to explain what you observed.

Then you make a prediction about how it's going to go. Do a test with a control and a variable.

And then you analyze the data and draw a conclusion to the scientific method to avoid all confusion.

Make an observation. Ask a question, form a hypothesis, and make a prediction. Do a test or experimentation, analyze data, and draw conclusions.

So this is my very favorite part of my job is that I spend a little bit of time putting together presentations on YouTube coming up with really fun examples. I love that scientific method song and now it will be in my head for the rest of the week probably.

Scientific method. Scientific method.

I think it such a great example though of how things that we learned, again when we were in fifth grade, can help us now in our day-to-day lives.

So I bet that if you think about it, there are things in your program where you are like, "I am not sure that that is working like I think it's working." Right -- you can think about your program and how it operates, and you might be like I don't know if we're really giving out as many incentives as we want to. Or maybe our detention really we're using that too much. Or it seems like we have kids for an awfully long time.

Why are kids in our program for two years? We should think about changing that.

And you can think about -- and I bet you can identify a problem or challenge in your court right now that you can use a version of the scientific method to solve.

And it looks like this. And I know this is a ridiculous slide. But you identify the problem and you ask a question. And then you find out if you have data available. If you do, then you are going to make a hypothesis about what is going on.

Why are kids in your program for over two years? What is your hypothesis?

And maybe they need to be in your program for two years, but you won't know unless you test.

So you make your hypothesis, you test it, and then if your hypothesis was correct, yea. You get to make a change to your program and throw a party. If it wasn't correct, yea, you get to try again.

So let's talk about what that looks like.

First of all, you are going to be deliberate. You will say, this is what we're going to do. This is how we are going to know if it is working or not working. And this is how long we're going to test for.

So let's talk about the real world and I see I have the Albuquerque, New Mexico team on. This going to be an abbreviated story about how the Albuquerque, New Mexico team increased their referrals.

If you participated in some of our other webinars, we have used this example before.

And part of the reason I wanted to use it here with continuous quality improvement is because we have used it before. So if you have seen our presentation on targeting, or read our publications, then we talk about the court and how they experienced needing to increase their referrals. The reason I want to use it now to talk about the continuous quality improvement is because they used a version of the scientific method.

Scientific method.

So they identified a problem. And this is back in 2013. The team was kind of in a crisis because they were in danger of losing their money. They got state funding but the state funding required them to meet certain benchmarks and they were not meeting them.

They didn't have very many participants. And they didn't have very many referrals.

And Albuquerque is a reasonable sized metropolitan area and they should have a robust juvenile drug treatment court.

So what were they to do?

They could identify lots of different problems. They only had 12 active participants. They were spending a lot of money per participant, because they can only aggregate the cost over a few participants. They had a low graduation rate and a high termination rate. You can see retention and termination go together there.

So they asked a question. They said, "Why are the participant numbers so low?"

Do they have the data available to support that question? Because if you don't have data available to support your question and to help you make a hypothesis, then you can't really use data to solve your problem, right?

So is this information available? Yes. The graduation retention and termination rate indicates the team is not getting the type of youth they needed. So that's how they are going to interpret and analyze that information.

And as a result they were not meeting capacity and were in danger of closing.

So then question is why weren't they getting the referrals? And they formed a hypothesis.

And the hypothesis was this, and I know in Albuquerque I'm simplifying some things here, so I appreciate you letting me use you as an example. But the referral sources did not like the juvenile drug treatment court and so that's why they were not referring to youth. And for this program, the referral source was largely probation. So the probation folks did not really like the treatment court. Maybe they were worried about giving up some of their caseload and that would affect their job and their funding. So they were not referring youth.

So this was their hypothesis. So they went to test the hypothesis. And of course, this is not quite like growing the plant from the seeds like what we saw the video -- testing the hypothesis was basically just a conversation.

They didn't have to form experiment so much as just go and say, "Hey, why aren't you referring kids? Is it because you don't like us?" And as it turns out, no, that was not the reason why.

But because they had the conversation with probation they found out the real reason. They learned that the target population was confusing. So they were not clear on who those right kids for the program were.

So probation officers would send youth over as a referral and then they would not be accepted, which as you can imagine was pretty frustrating.

So they are sending kids -- no, this isn't the right kid, this isn't the right kid. Lindsay Lucero, I think, from Albuquerque describes it as who is this magical unicorn kid they are looking for? Probation did not know.

And there wasn't a clear process. So who receives the referral, and what happens, and who the gatekeepers were, was all very confused for the people in probation who wanted to make referrals.

So then what happens?

And I love this slide -- I feel like I want to use a picture of this kid in everything I do. I feel like you get to this point in the presentation and this is how you all feel.

This is exhausting.

Well, this is what happens, this is all very exciting. Albuquerque changed their program so they reacted to the data they had collected. So they created a better target population. They went out and trained their referral sources. They had a process so the referral sources knew how to get kids to them. And they didn't all work on it. So you can imagine you have eight, 10, 12 people on your team. It's pretty hard to get the entire team together to work on any one of these things.

So instead they had a small group of their team work on this and then brought it back to the rest of the team.

They made a list of all the characteristics of the kids that they wanted. And remember this was in 2013, so they didn't have information that we all have now. So based on the new juvenile drug court guidelines, we know that the youth should be 14 to 17, moderate to high risk, and with a substance abuse disorder.

So Albuquerque can make changes now to the target population if they need to reflect those things.

But at the time, they wanted to make sure that these things were met. They wanted a history of prior treatment. That way they knew that they had kids that definitely had a challenge for substance abuse. They didn't want to take kids that didn't have a substance use disorder because those kids can be served with other programs. And they wanted kids that scored moderate to high risk. And they developed a checklist for the referral sources. So they could go out to the referral sources and say, "If you can check yes, to all of these things, that youth is the right youth."

So it wasn't an overnight process, right -- they had to make changes, they had to react and they had to set benchmarks about where they wanted to get to. So in fiscal year 2015 they had increased their active participation from 12 to 27. Their graduation rate went up because they were actually getting the kids that made sense for the program they had designed. Their termination rate decreased and as you can imagine, their retention rate increased.

And of course, their cost per client went down because they doubled the number of clients. So they were being much, much more fiscally effective then with a larger number of clients.

So let's talk about performance measures. I don't have what performance measures Albuquerque set for themselves as they were going along. They had some, they had benchmarks they wanted to meet as they were doing things, but I don't have that. So we will go back and revisit that drug court in my head. We are going back to Jessicaville.

So in my imaginary juvenile jug court, we have identified a problem. And that is that parents, the caring adults and family members, are not really engaged in the process.

Not everybody is coming to court, and when we have activities like family game night, not too many folks are showing up. And that is kind of a bummer for us.

Because we know again when we go back to the juvenile drug treatment court guidelines, family engagement is enormously important for our kids to be successful.

So in my imaginary program, we wanted to make a change.

So we asked a question: how do we know that parents aren't engaged? Well, this is our data. We know how often parents are attending court and others activities because we're counting that.

So if you want to know how engaged your parents are, this is a measure of that.

If you're not counting how many times parents are absent from court or from your family activities, or how many times they don't return your phone calls when you call as a probation officer to check in for curfew or whatever, then you don't know.

So this is a thing to keep track of, and these might be data elements that you are not tracking right now.

But they should be pretty easy to keep track of, right -- you can just do little tick marks for each time you got -- you can set up a code. Or you can put a smiley face for every time you get a response and a frowny face for every time you don't. Because remember, this should be fun. Go back to our Peewee's Playhouse example.

But there are ways. So those are things you can keep track of and if you are not tracking them and it's something that is important to your program, then track it.

Start saying yes we will count those things.

Right -- we're going to find out how many times we have a parent who doesn't return our phone calls, who doesn't come to court, because then we will be able to say we can make an intervention for that one particular family, who we are having hard time getting in contact with. But we can also look at how all of our families are interacting with the court and say things like, "70% of the parents are coming to court every week." That's a thing to know and a thing to keep track of.

This is data.

So in my program we thought that if parents felt more supported, they would be more likely to engage in the process. And so we thought a parent support group could be helpful.

So we decided to plan a parent support group. And anytime you do something new in your juvenile drug court, I want you to do a process like this. I want you to make a plan, and I want you to figure out how you will know if you are successful at your plan. I don't want you to just start one and then come back and say, "Did that work or didn't it?" I want you to start from the beginning -- remember, be deliberate. So I talked to two courts where they have started things like family support groups, and the family support groups haven't been successful.

And when they go back, and they didn't set benchmarks and they didn't have a plan, but they go back and do a postmortem because they are going to shut down the parent support group, they will often find out things like parent support group wasn't at a convenient time. Or sometimes the person who is leading the parent support group is a 24-year-old who works for the treatment provider and parents don't necessarily feel a great connection there. But they don't necessarily find out this information until after they have already kind of had a failure. So what I want you to do is, rather than wait and see and hope, I want you to start out deliberately. So I want you to select a subcommittee just like Albuquerque did. In my imaginary court, we gave our parents a survey, so we can be sure that we knew what they wanted in their support group.

And because I really wanted to get responses for that survey, and I have all of the money I need in my imaginary program, I provided incentives for the parents. I gave them all a five dollar gas card if they filled out my survey.

And based on the survey results, this is what we proposed:

We are going to have family support groups that will meet on Tuesdays at seven, at the same time that youth have groups. And again because I have no real world constraints here in my imaginary court, we will have childcare. This is like the ideal family support group.

And I know if you guys are thinking about doing this yourselves, you might not be able to do all these things. But the point for our presentation today is that it is a plan. It is written down with steps to follow. That is what continuous quality improvement is about. So we have collected data, we have analyzed it, and this is about reacting. We are reacting to the data with our plan, and we're making sure that we have performance measures to know if our plan is working.

So we're going to define success and set some benchmarks. And so here it is. I don't want to be perfect right out of the gate. So I am going to set myself some pretty low benchmarks. So after my parent support operates for three months, I want to have 50% parent participation. So I want half of the parents in my program coming to my parent support group. And I want a 70% satisfaction rating from the parents who are attending.

So I will give them a survey after three months to find out whether they like it. Again that's qualitative data. That is information that is useful to me in the moment to know how my program is working.

And then because the whole reason I am starting a parent support group is that I want my parents to be more participatory in court and in our family fun events, I am going to set benchmarks there too. So I want to 30% increase in attendance in court and a 60% increase in family therapy.

So this is it. If I meet my benchmarks, I get to celebrate the success and set new benchmarks. Right -- because that was good -- 50% participation, that's good. But can I get better? You bet I can get better. So I can set some new benchmarks. So go from good to better to best.

If I don't meet the benchmark, then I need to find out what went wrong. I need to ask those questions. I need to say where did this fail?

All right, so now I want to do a little bit of an interactive session. Up at the top of your screen, right above the PowerPoint, you can see an icon of a person with their hand raised. If you click on that, you have options for different things. So you have a red X and a green checkmark that are both up there. So if you agree, use the green checkmark. And if you disagree, choose the red X. So I will give you some scenarios.

And I just had my Adobe crash, so can you advance the slide for me?

Sorry about that everyone. The next slide is up so if you want to go ahead and raise your hand or click the check if you agree with the problem that is on the screen.

One of our youth's in the program complained that the girls get more incentives than boys.

All right, so do you agree that you can solve this problem with data?

We are getting a lot of green checkmarks. So here's the question you have to ask yourself always with problems that are generated by the youth, is whether or not you are going to take this problem seriously. And so I'm going to ask, I'm going to say, yeah, let's take this problem seriously. So my friend Trevor from earlier, he is like, "Hey, you guys are way easier on the girls than boys. And I don't think that's fair."

And so you're going to take that seriously. You're going to find out.

So can you solve that? Yes, you can solve this problem with data. You can track how you are distributing your incentives. So if you're not already keeping track of your incentives, I would encourage you to start doing so.

One of the things that we really see with our programs is that you get a reputation pretty quickly for being more punitive than positive.

And that's partly because it is easier to track sanctions. Sanctions are little bit more discrete than incentives.

But incentives are enormously important for changing behavior. You know that from our adolescent development conversation. And so if you're not really keeping track of your incentives, I want you to start. And you can figure out how that's going to work for you. But that might just be in court that the coordinator just makes little tick marks on her pad, or maybe it's the court clerk who is doing that, or maybe it's even the judge. You're just making a little tick, a little #, every time a youth gets an incentive. And it can be an incentive like getting to pick candy out of the candy bucket but it also can be an incentive like praise from the judge, or praise from another team member, or even praise from a parent. Right? So when the judge says to that parent, "Hey, how did Trevor do at home?" And mom says, "He actually had a really great week. I am really proud of Trevor."

That is an incentive. It's not a huge incentive, but it is part of a range of incentives. That is a positive interaction that makes Trevor feel good and want to keep doing the behavior that will get that feeling back again.

That's what our incentives are for. We want kids to feel good, and we want them to keep doing the things that will make them feel good that aren't drugs.

So in this case, we need to keep track, we need count. We need to count if Trevor gets applause. We need to count of Trevor gets that tangible incentive. If you give your kids snacks to come to court, to just show up, that's an incentive. You are incentivizing showing up. That is an incentive. Track it. Keep count.

So if you are not keeping track of your incentives now, start. And if you start counting them and you can say we are giving out a lot of incentives, but are we giving more to the girls than to the boys? Then you can answer that question.

So you started counting them. And then if you determine that your team is giving more incentives to girls and boys, well that's when you are going to analyze and react. So that's when you are going to have the conversation about why would girls get more incentives than boy. Is it that you have a bias towards boys in your program? Is it because the boys in your program are more difficult? Is it because the girls in your program are more successful? You won't know unless you track it and ask the question.

And a lot of times it might be because you have fewer girls than boys, and so it's just a law of averages. You have fewer people to deal with so you don't have a great or

large percentage to draw from. So it looks like girls are getting more incentives than boys.

But this way you will know, you can track it, and you can count it. You can react to it.

Okay, next problem. I'm going to clear everyone's history so we can get new green checkmarks or red Xs. So this is a problem we hear as we go around the country, that there is an opioid epidemic. Is this a problem or challenge that your court is facing that could be solved with data?

So if you think if it can be solved with data, let's do a green checkmark. And if no, then a red X.

And I've got some people raising their hand and say maybe -- and that's okay. We're getting a lot of red Xs and some green checkmarks.

All right, so let me tell you what I think.

Can you solve the opioid epidemic with data? No, but it can help you determine the scope of the epidemic. And this isn't something that you have to solve just as the juvenile drug treatment court. This is a community wide problem. It can help you also identify whether or not this is a challenge for the youth in your community or for the adults in your community. Because I'm going to guess, even if you are having opioid epidemic among your young adults and adults, like maybe 20- to 80-year-olds. Maybe your 16-year-olds are less likely to use heroin and prescription drugs, and so you might end up with a few of those kids in your program. But maybe you're going to just use individualized programming for them, right?

So this gives you a chance to advocate for better funding, better programs where you need them.

So maybe what you need for your young people is not more treatment for opioids, but maybe you need prevention.

For those 14- to 16-year-olds, it's more about prevention. And then maybe you need to help as part of the community coalition -- get better treatment, medically assisted treatment for the other folks in your community that are suffering from the opioid epidemic.

But this way you can know, you can look at the numbers and know what your challenge is.

I was in Montgomery County, Ohio and they are right there in the heart of the opioid epidemic. They have folks that are dying because of this.

And they actually used their data. They went and they figured it out to get federal funding to start a family drug court because that is one of their biggest problems.

So they were able to look at the problem, look at the data, and use that to get funding.

So that can help us understand the scope and extend of this kind of problem.

All right, last one. So you're referring youth to treatment program X but the youth are not being successful there. Or at least that's what you feel like. You're at staffing and you are like, "Why do we keep sending kids over to the Choices program? They are never successful at Choices. We have to put them someplace else anyway. And maybe we should stop referring kids there."

And Choices is just a thing I made up in my head -- it's not an actual program although I think there are probably programs call that, but I'm not talking about anything in particular. So can you solve the problem of referring to the treatment program that you don't feel like it is successful? Can you solve it with data?

So if you say yes, green checkmark. If you say no, a red X.

Yes, we are getting a ton of green checkmarks. Of course, you can solve the problem with data.

So I say oh my, yes.

So first of all, you can determine the extent of the problem. So when we go out and we observe courts, I come out to your court and I am observing it, I am only seeing a snapshot of what is happening in your program.

And sometimes during that snapshot, I will see this kind of argument happen where people are like, "We should stop referring to Choices. None of the kids are ever very successful there. Why are we doing this?"

But the decision that you make, whether or not to send kids or not, becomes really subjective if you don't do this: if you don't find out how many kids are successful or unsuccessful. It could turn out to be that you sent ten kids to the program, and eight of the 10 have been successful but the two that have been unsuccessful have been really unsuccessful. Or have been visibly, spectacularly unsuccessful in a way that makes you go, "Well, this isn't working for us."

You don't know though, unless you look.

Or it could be that the girls that go there are successful and the boys aren't. Or maybe it is kids that live in a certain neighborhood are successful at that program and other kids are not.

There are a whole bunch of different factors that can be at play here.

So you want to look at it, and you want to take a look at that information that you have available to you.

Because that will help you make good decisions.

So if it turned out that when we send kids to this program they are not successful, this gives you a way to hold them accountable. Right?

So if you have a provider that keeps kicking kids out of groups, and you really need kids to be in groups, then this is way to say, "Hey, we have been keeping track and it looks like you're kicking our kids out 50% of the time. Can we talk about why that is? And can we make a change? Is it something that we need to change about how we are enforcing treatment attendance? Is it something that we need to change about how you are conducting groups?" But you won't know unless you look.

So this is, I think, the theme of the presentation: you won't know unless you look.

So I would encourage you all to take a look at what is happening in your program, and think about whether or not you need to make a change.

And that brings me to the question portion of our day.

So you have any questions?

Okay, so Katie says, "You mentioned getting an outside evaluator. Can you give us tips on where and how to find an effective outside evaluator?"

Yes, there are a number of avenues you can take to find an evaluator. First and foremost would be your local university. If you can talk to them, they are always graduate students who are looking for projects and often times they can serve as an outside evaluator.

You can contact a national organizations MPC research, and they do evaluations of treatment courts all around the country. You have to pay them but they can come in and do an outside evaluation.

You can also look to -- and we actually have some resources on this that we will send out -- you can look to the national organizations like the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges but also the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and American University, and they have access.

To lists of folks who can be available to do evaluations for you.

So there are a number of different avenues you can use to find an outside evaluator.

So Alyssa asks, "Is there a checklist to train referral sources?"

So yes, if you wanted to train referral sources using kind of the checklist that Albuquerque used, you can take a look at that. That is in our publication *The Right Kid at the Right Time*. But really what you want to do is create your own training for referral sources. So you want to think about who you referral sources are and what they need to know about how to refer kids to you.

And then go and talk to them.

So in our example, of course, it was the probation folks but you might be getting referrals from the prosecutor's office. If all the referrals are coming from your prosecution or your defense attorneys, then you need to talk to those folks. And hopefully they are on your team, but they if are not, then you need to go and have those conversations about, "Here are the kids we're looking for, here's why we think this is successful for them, and we would like you to start making more referrals. And here's how you can tell if this is the right kid."

So you will want to go through a process and just like Albuquerque did, to determine who your right kid is and how you can share that information with your sources.

So Judge Larson asks, "How do recommend measuring effectiveness of providers? So if a program seems to be ineffective, isn't it important to know what the success rate is compared to other programs?"

Using providers is always very, very important because we have the two prongs of treatment court really are about court and treatment. So our programs are designed for those kids that can't be successful in court, unless they get treatment. They are not successful in probation without getting substance abuse treatment but they are not successful treatment without that push from court.

But working with a provider can be difficult because they have different standards and guidelines, and different rules. So you will want to ask questions of your providers. You want to say, you want to find out what kind of treatment they are doing. Whether or not it is evidence based and manualized, those are good questions to ask. And then you will want to keep track. Right -- so this is a thing we're talking about. You want to find out how often are the kids that you refer there have infractions compared to other kids.

And you will want to pay attention to what is happening in programs for your young people.

So if your young people are routinely kicked out of group or not allowed to participate in group because they have arrived late or something like that, those are all things, those are all data point that you can use for further negotiation with your provider.

If you have kids that you are doing reassessment of who are going to a provider, and you don't see a change in the risk, need, and substance use level, then reassessment data can tell you that that provider isn't a good match for that youth. On the youth level, you can use that information to take to make that determination.

In some communities there are community accreditation boards that rate their providers, and so you will want to see if there's any of that information available. Honestly, I would start with googling your providers and seeing what kind of information comes up as far as that. Because if there's grades posted for them and they do report cards and stuff, that's where you would be able to find that kind of information.

And Katie now asks, "How do you collect usable feedback if there is a concern that participant's parents have negative attitudes about the program? For example, complaints that the program requires too much family time."

I would say that is useful information to you. I think you should definitely collect that information. You should ask the question and then if they say you are using too much family time, then find out what they would consider to be inappropriate amount of family time.

And then you need to talk about whether or not you can make a change to the program based on this information.

It is like opening Pandora's Box. Because if you can't make a change to be responsive to your families or to your participants based on their feedback, then they can feel like their feedback is not being heard. So you will want to be transparent about what you can and cannot do.

So you can ask and if parents say, "I don't want to come to court every week," but your team feels like that is a really important part of the program and you're not willing to be flexible, then you need to say, "I hear what you're saying. This is an important part of our program. This is not something where we are willing to make a change. Let's talk about some areas where we can."

So when you ask for that kind of participant feedback, be thoughtful about how you can use it. And if you don't think you can be responsive to what their feedback is going to be, don't ask the question.

If you don't have any funding to do family and parenting incentives, don't ask them what they would like. If you don't have any way to meet that need, then just don't ask that question. So be really thoughtful about it and figure out what you are trying to find out.

If you hear things from a rumor mill or just one of those parents who is particularly vocal, that they think it's taking too much family time, this is a perfect time to do a survey. Because then you can say okay, we have heard from two really vocal parents that they think we're taking up too much of their time. We have 25 parents or 25 kids participating in the program, and everybody else is like, "Yeah, it's okay." Right -- so this is a perfect way to find out if what you are hearing is just from those really loud folks or if you actually need to make an adjustment.

And Elo just shared our Right Kid Right Time publication so if you need to you can take a look.

Katie is asking, "Any tips for getting team members on board who seem to be stuck in an 'old school' adult model of thinking?" So one of the great things to do is, of course, to participate in our trainings, which are all adolescent focused and developed.

We can actually come out too and do on-site technical assistance, either the National Council can or the folks that are doing the new guidelines training and technical assistance, which is American University and NADCP, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals. You can definitely email us at contactus@ncjfcj.org.

Elo, can you also put your and my email in the chat? And you have probably already been getting emails from Elo already with lots of information about this webinar. So she can be a resource and get your question to the right people. Or you can contact me directly. And here's my email.

But really, getting team members on board is tricky. And so we have lots of recorded webinars like this one. We also have the online learning platform at drugcourtsonline.org, which is where you can hear from other professionals, so judges can hear from other judges. You can hear from a juvenile drug treatment court judge saying "this is how being a judge in a juvenile drug treatment courts is different." You can hear from prosecutors and attorneys talking about the same things, and from probation officers. And so you can have that kind of peer learning happening. So I definitely suggest checking that out as well.

But good luck. Sometimes those folks just don't end up fitting on the team and opt out, which is another option altogether.

All right other questions about continuous quality improvement?

{Closed Caption} Using Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to Create Your Perfect Juvenile Drug Treatment Court
Event Started: 4/19/2017 1:17:26 PM ET

I will say we are also happy to, going back to the evaluation question, -- the National Council -- I don't have any dollars to send an evaluator out to do a full outside evaluation for your program but I have a ton of datasets that you can take a look at as possible things that you can use. And I do have access to folks from our university at the University of Nevada in Reno. We have Sarah Trescher who is a Research Associate. She can talk to you about how best to prepare to be evaluated. And I am happy to put you in touch with her. Or with other folks at our National Center for Juvenile Justice that do all of our research. They can also talk to you about at least the elements of what you would need to undertake a full-blown evaluation of your program.

I would like to really thank everyone for participating today. Hopefully you found this useful. And we are here as a resource for you, so please do feel free to contact us with any questions after the event.

[Event concluded]