



CQI Quick Sheet

Hearing Quality

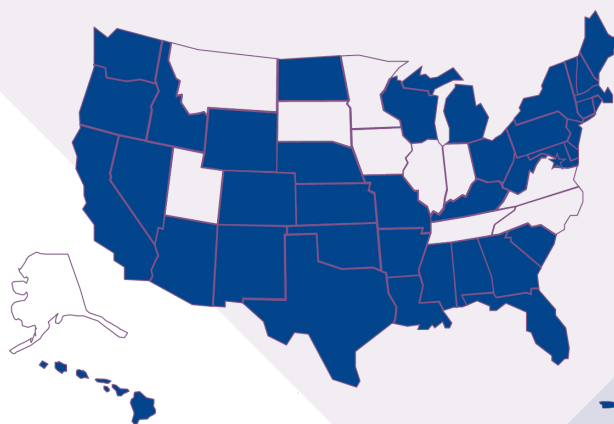
The CQI Quick Sheet series is meant to assist Court Improvement Programs plan for evaluating an area of focus. It includes some specific questions to ask, as well as some useful tips on methodologies to help achieve goals to improve in this area.

Preparing for the Work

*Should your state or tribe focus on hearing quality?
Here are some questions to ask:*

- Why is this issue important in your state or tribe?
- Do you have any reason to believe that hearing quality needs improvement?
 - Are all parties present and engaged?
 - Is discussion meaningful?
- What do you already know about hearing quality in your state?
 - Do you have any data on current hearing practices?
 - Are there state statutes related to hearing quality?
 - Do you have standards of practice related to hearing quality?
 - Have you had any trainings on hearing quality?

States with Hearing Quality Projects (2015)



Approaching the Work

My state or tribe wants to focus on hearing quality. Where do we start?

1. **Set goals.** Think about what you want to know and change. Would you like to:

Describe

You want to be able to describe current practice, including current strengths and opportunities for improvement. This requires some type of baseline data collection.

Improve

You want to demonstrate improvements in specific practices. This requires baseline and follow-up data (to show change over time).

Affect

You want to explore the relationship between hearing quality and outcomes of interest. This often requires more intensive data collection and may include baseline and follow-up or additional outcome data.

2. **Define hearing quality.** How are you going to define hearing quality? What specific dimensions of hearing quality do you plan to explore?

3. **Identify data sources.** What types of data do you already have? What type of data do you need to achieve your goals? What kind of data collection methodology will be most helpful?

How Do You Define Hearing Quality?

Consider sources that have already defined hearing quality:

- Resource Guidelines (<http://tinyurl.com/ResourceGuidelines>)
- Court Improvement Program announcement – Attachment A.

Some example indicators include:

1. Parents noticed, present, and given opportunity to be heard
2. Youth present and given opportunity to be heard
3. Presence of legal representation for parents and youth
4. Specific discussion or inquiry related to child well-being
5. Specificity of court orders
6. Ordered services tailored to meet family's needs

Where Can You Get Data?

Data for hearing quality can come from multiple sources. It depends largely on the goals of your project, how you choose to define hearing quality, and what resources you have available to collect data. Potential data sources include:

- Court observation
- User surveys (from parents or youth after attending a hearing)
- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus groups with parents or stakeholders
- Case file reviews
- Court data from case management system
- Agency data
- Other sources unique to your state

Helpful Tips & Methodologies Other States Have Used

Some states have already begun exploring the quality of court hearings and trying to improve practice. the states have focused on many programs and practices, including conducting court observation to assess current strengths and opportunities for improvement, implementing specialty courts (or dockets) focused on specific populations, changing protocols or processes, identifying barriers, and exploring the use of alternative dispute resolution. **To CQI the process, it is important to think about how you will *measure the program/practice*, including how you will measure any changes that occur.** Below are some different methodologies that have been used, and some suggestions for variables that they may be helpful in capturing.

Tip: Start small. Not everything needs to have massive quantitative data to be meaningful.

Court Observation

Court observation is one of the most commonly used methods to assess hearing quality. It provides a snapshot of current practice and is useful in determining who is present, how they are engaged, and what topics are discussed at hearings.

Cons: Resource intensive
Tips: If your state records hearings, you could “observe” remotely, reducing needed resources.

Focus Groups

Focus groups with stakeholders are ideal to identify what professionals view as current strengths and challenges related to hearing quality. Stakeholders can also help you to define hearing quality and narrow your focus to a specific practice.

Pros: Resource light
Cons: Perception only, no quantitative data

Surveys

Case file review or review of casemanagement data can help to reveal things that are harder to determine in hearings, such as specificity of the orders and how tailored ordered services are for the family. You can also typically identify who is present at the hearing.

Cons: Resource intensive, miss specific things only observable in court

Data Systems

Court user surveys have been used to determine how parents and/or youth felt about the hearing. These can help to identify whether parties felt they had an opportunity to be heard and were treated fairly in the process.

Cons: Perception only, may be hard to assess change over time.
Tips: If incentives are available, you will get more participants.