

## Program Improvement Plan (PIP) Guide

Many child welfare supervisors spend a lot of time “hallway consulting” and “putting out fires” which in essence means their time is spent realizing and reacting to problems. Because we are so busy doing, we often find it difficult to have the opportunity to stand back and take a hard look at what we want to accomplish and how we go about getting to desired outcomes. This can be achieved with the use of a strategic planning process. The following information is intended to assist in getting the most out of your strategic planning experience. So, you might ask, “How do I begin?”

First of all, you need to remember the real benefit of the strategic planning process is the process, not the “plan document”. Both the QA and QI specialists should be included in the PIP planning process. They are valuable members of your team. The provided matrix is only a template to make every circuit’s plan somewhat consistent, so don’t get bogged down with finding a way to make your plan fit the instrument. There is technical assistance available from Central Office and QI specialists to assist you with the matrix.

Remember, there is no “perfect” plan. Just do your best to strategically think about what your circuit could do to make improvements in various practice areas, some of which may have been identified in your circuit readiness assessment. Through this process you will learn from the experience, and your skill will be enhanced next time around. Yes, there will be a next time around as this improvement planning process should be ever changing and ongoing. The strategic planning process is usually not an “aha” experience; it’s a series of small steps as your circuit heads in the preferred direction. Therefore, keep in mind, things usually are not as bad as you fear, nor as good as you’d like. So, start simple. Develop only a few goals (no more than four) and keep your strategies limited. Add more strategies as action steps are completed. This practice makes your matrix a living document not just a document which sits on a shelf gathering dust. Your circuit’s strategic plan should be a practical, action-oriented guide based on issues already identified in your readiness assessments, to direct goal-setting for achieving meaningful results over time. Therefore, a goal is your desired end result with specific and measurable action steps and targets for accomplishing your set goals.

When deciding on goals, strategies and action steps, you will need to know if these are achievable and measurable. The following questions may be helpful:

- What are we trying to measure?
- Can the improvement be measured by reviewing existing data?
- Can the improvement be measured through any QA process in place?
- What systems do we currently have in place for measuring improvement action?
- Who might we team with to monitor improvements?

After you have read this entire page, you are probably *still* wondering what the benefits of strategic planning are. One way to measure the *quality* of your strategic plan is to ask yourself if your plan includes the following elements:

- 1) Clearly supports the Children's Division's mission
- 2) Communicates circuit goals
- 3) Develops a sense of plan ownership among staff and stakeholders
- 4) Focuses resources on key priorities
- 5) Builds a consensus about where the circuit is heading
- 6) Increases efficiency and effectiveness of work processes
- 7) Builds a strong team spirit
- 8) Resolves barriers to achieving goals

If you have accomplished all or most of the eight strategic plan essentials, consider your plan ready to assist you in moving your practice forward.

Good Luck!