

AQI

Unlocks the Power of Data for Meaningful Quality Enhancements

Does the thought of analytics and quality improvement data make you uneasy? In some organizations, quality data is treated like a pass-fail report card, leaving employees feeling like they are under scrutiny. Others may embrace data but struggle to find its proper context or understand how to apply it effectively.

At Children's Home Society, the Analytics and Quality Improvement (AQI) team works with program partners to identify the right questions and develop projects that lead to satisfying answers.

"We aim to meet people where they are, while continually advancing the sophistication of our analytics," says Dr. Natalie Conner, Director of AQI at CHS. "Instead of focusing on errors or weaknesses, we strive to provide context for the data and learn from it."

In fiscal year 2024, CHS provided services to more than 23,000 clients, including children in care, caregivers, foster parents, students, and community partners who work with the Division of Social Services and hospitals. This number reflects a significant population that benefited from the organization's quality services.

"The work we do at CHS directly affects the lives of children and families, which is why it's crucial to measure our impact," explains Rebecca Starnes, Chief Program Officer at CHS. "We're committed to ensuring that our efforts make their lives better. As the world around us evolves, so must we. We're committed to continuous growth as we face new challenges head-on."



Natalie Conner,
Director of AQI



Rebecca Starnes,
Chief Program Officer

DEDICATED QUALITY TEAM

When Rebecca joined CHS in 2010, the organization had access to program data but didn't have a dedicated quality team.

"For a few years, we had a handful of employees who did a measure of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) work," says Rebecca. "But we wanted to have a dedicated team to work toward quality improvement, to answer questions with projects, and to exercise a more robust approach to data analysis."

CHS hired Natalie, as our AQI director, to pull together all relevant quality measurement activities. Her team has been tackling these projects to make continuous enhancements throughout the organization.

In addition to Natalie, the AQI team includes:

- **Mariamme Burgess**, MSW, Data Analyst, with five years of experience working as a foster care specialist at CHS
- **Michelle Calvert**, MPA, CQI Lead, with 13 years of experience at CHS

INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACH TO QUALITY

The AQI team collaborates with CHS program partners to identify key questions related to quality and performance. Together, they work through the following steps:

1. **Implementation.** Assess whether the program has been executed as originally planned.
2. **Output monitoring.** Verify that the team is reaching the expected number of clients served.
3. **Outcome measurement.** Evaluate whether anticipated impacts and improvements are being achieved in targeted areas.
4. **Continuous Quality Improvement.** Ensure that the processes are consistently followed and tweaked when necessary for ongoing enhancement.

AQI experts take an individualized approach to collecting and measuring quality data, tailoring the assessment to each program's objectives, the expertise of its staff, and the data systems in place.

According to Rebecca, listening and observing are essential. AQI team members spend time with CHS program staff to

see what their clients (children in care, caregivers, etc.) are experiencing, forming a true partnership between AQI and CHS program leaders.

"They are doing the work and meeting with clients," Natalie explains. "So, we must pay close attention and try to walk in their shoes to simulate their work. Our goal is to make their work easier and more effective."

Including the AQI team during program planning has inspired program leaders to ask questions that help shape future goals and activities. "As a result, we now have more ideas for projects and reports than we'd ever have time to do," reveals Rebecca.

COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL REPORT

For the past three years, the AQI team has produced the Program Summary Annual Report. This internal document celebrates the hard work being accomplished at CHS. Managers and others at CHS can use the report to find the data they need quickly and easily.

The comprehensive report also reveals the organization's progress toward program goals. It leverages data to engage staff members and highlights the ongoing cross-collaboration throughout the organization.

"There's a lot of curiosity about the various initiatives underway at CHS," says Rebecca. "The compiled data helps break down silos and allows everyone to see how they fit into the larger organization."

AQI team members compiled the Number Gathering Guide to document how they gathered the data for the annual report. This guide communicates how the team calculated

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and collated the numbers, enabling replication and easy knowledge transfer to fellow employees.

QUALITY SUCCESS STORIES

AQI experts have seen outstanding results across multiple CHS programs. Consider the following examples:

HealthySteps. This program works with medical providers to support families with children ages 0-3. The program team struggled to collect client and provider feedback regarding the program. One of the CQI teams worked with program leaders to revise the survey to collect client satisfaction data. As a result, the response rate increased from 30% to 90%. The HealthySteps national office is working to distribute the new survey nationally. They plan to work with CHS on a national publication to showcase the revised survey and its results.

Child-Focused Recruitment. This program has grown significantly over the past five years. While hiring and training new staff, they said the process for Child-Focused Recruitment was difficult to learn. They struggled to feel confident in their mastery of the work. The AQI team organized focus groups to work with the new staff and improve the onboarding experience and program model. New hires are getting up to speed faster, feeling less stressed, and performing better in their roles.

The AQI team was pleased to present their findings on the Net Promoter Index (NPI), a key quality indicator that reflects client satisfaction and loyalty. Five years ago, CHS received a grant to collect satisfaction scores from

clients and community partners. For the first time, CHS included all surveys and programs and compiled a score across all programs in 2023. Here are the results:

- Average NPI (clients): About 88% of clients surveyed indicated they would recommend CHS to others.
- Average NPI (community partners): About 95% of community partners surveyed indicated they would recommend CHS to others.

UNIQUE SKILL SET

A vital factor in AQI's success is the composition of its team. Having experience in direct practice, each team member deeply understands and values the clients they serve. Natalie notes she hasn't encountered another group with such a unique blend of skills and experience.

While the AQI team is known for its clarity and precision, it also has a creative side.

"We're not just crunching numbers; we're asking questions and exploring the reasons behind any changes," Rebecca notes. "We connect data to inquiries from CHS program leaders, examine policy trends, and provide as much context as possible."

Natalie and Rebecca continue to be impressed by AQI's customer service functions.

"As stewards of the data, we carry a serious responsibility to our colleagues," says Natalie. "We aim to use this responsibility to highlight the incredible work performed by our staff. As we support them, we pride ourselves on being responsive and approachable."

Children's Home Society Recruiter Honored By the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Amy Castelloe Named Child-Focused Recruiter of the Year

In late April, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption hosted more than 600 Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters and staff for its annual Wendy's Wonderful Kids Summit. Children's Home Society's Child-Focused Recruiter Amy Castelloe was recognized as Recruiter of the Year at the summit.

Child-Focused Recruitment follows the Wendy's Wonderful Kids® model that connects the longest-waiting youth in foster care to extended family or an adoptive family uniquely suited for the youth. Children served through this model are three times more likely to be adopted.

"We are so proud of Amy, and she represents the dedication of the full Child-Focused Recruitment team," said Rebecca Starnes, CHS Chief Program Officer. "The accomplishments we make through

our Child-Focused Recruitment team are particularly rewarding in the success attained connecting the children, who have waited the longest, with a permanent, safe, and loving family."

Amy was recognized as Wendy's Wonderful Kids 2024 Recruiter of the Year for her passion for permanent placements as evidenced in how she diligently approaches implementing the Child-Focused Recruitment model. She turns over every stone and revisits previous steps when a dead end is encountered. Her bright light shines throughout her work by reframing situations to support those who need it.



"What I enjoy most about being a recruiter is the relationships we get to build with the children. I think it's so important for all children to have a permanent home."

- Amy Castelloe