Conducting Observations for Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Purpose

This tool is intended to be used by Teen Pregnancy Prevention Programs (TPP) funded by MCAH who use facilitators and health educators to implement multi-session curricula or single session informational presentations.

For the purpose of this guide, “facilitator” will refer to the person implementing (person being observed) and “program coordinator” to the observer.

The purpose of this Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Observation Tool is for program coordinators and project staff to work collaboratively to identify areas of program improvement and staff development.

Program coordinators observe implementation of selected lessons or activities, and then debrief with facilitators to reflect on what went well and what could be adjusted to strengthen implementation.

Selected lessons or activities to observe may include but are not limited to:

- multi-session curricula (Evidence Based Program Model, Life Skills Curricula);
- informational presentations (single sessions or brief one-day presentations)

The tool focuses on factors that are observable and that can be altered. Specifically, the intent is to identify strengths, challenges and solutions regarding program implementation with an emphasis on factors that impact quality of implementation.

Observations can provide useful data for a program; below are some key points to discuss with all project staff when describing the purpose of conducting observations for CQI:

- Observations provide an opportunity to assess implementation and factors that may influence the quality of implementation, such as behavior and interactions among participants and facilitators, implementation quality, and the settings in which activities are being implemented.
- Observations provide an opportunity to identify aspects of program implementation that are working well and those that could benefit from further improvement.

This observation tool is not intended to be used as a performance evaluation.
Requirements

Having multiple data points on implementation cycles will provide a more stable picture for making decisions about program improvements.

The requirements for conducting observations are as follows:

- Conduct at least two observations of one facilitator, observing two different lessons/modules/activities per year. You are free to observe more facilitators if you wish.
- Conduct the debrief and feedback in person and in the spirit of program improvement. Remember the intention of this tool.
- Observations can be within the same setting (e.g., school based, juvenile, afterschool, outreach facility, etc.) and multi-session curricula (Evidence Based Program Model, Life Skills Curricula) or informational presentations (single sessions or brief one-shot presentations)
- If observing an EBPM for CA PREP, the program coordinator should be familiar with the EBPM being observed.

Overview of Steps for this Tool

To use this tool, a program supervisor will need to complete the following steps:

1. Determine who, what, when and where you will conduct the observations
2. Conduct the observation and record findings on the Observation Tool
3. Summarize and discuss the lesson with the facilitator who was observed, identifying what worked and what could be changed.
4. Report your observations using an online summary form.

Materials needed

- Content of lesson/session being observed
- Observation Tool

Training and Technical Assistance

Training and technical assistance will be provided through:

- Webinar training on how to conduct observations
- Step-by-step instructions for using tool
- Evaluation Liaison support
Step 1: Decide Who, What, Where and When to Use Tool

Determine Who Will Conduct the Observation

The observation tool should be completed by a program coordinator or lead facilitator responsible for overseeing and monitoring the project facilitator who implements the group-based curricula (EBPMs, Life Skills), informational presentations (single sessions or brief one-day presentations) or other curriculum-based program activities.

Decide What: Choose which Lessons/Activities you Plan to Observe

The first step to using this tool involves deciding what you want to observe. You can observe a multi-session curricula (Evidence Based Program Model, Life Skills Curricula) or informational presentations (single sessions or brief one-day presentations). For PREP Sub-awardees, you would choose a lesson/activity from the EBPM being implemented to observe.

Select the sessions or activities you plan to observe, then spend time reviewing the goal, content, skills, teaching strategies and activities to be observed.

For example, you may decide that you want to observe lessons or an activity that addresses birth control methods. Before you observe, be sure to read the full lesson so you know what to expect during implementation.

Decide Where: Choose a Population or Setting to Observe

TPP Programs often work with multiple populations across multiple sites. You may want to start by focusing on a specific population or setting to observe. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Are you working with a population you haven’t worked with before?** If yes, you may be interested in observing how selected sessions are implemented to understand how the material or content will be received.

- **Are you implementing your sessions in a variety of different settings?** If yes, you may want to observe in each setting to determine whether there are setting specific factors that affect implementation.

- **Are you using new approaches to delivering information?** If yes, you may want to observe the implementation of the new sessions to see how participants are engaging and interacting.
**Decide When:**

There is no need to observe every session or activity from all of your facilitators each time they conduct a session.
Consider the following points to help you determine the timing and logistics for conducting your observations.

- Consider observing earlier cycles (e.g., at the start of program year) if you are in a new setting or when new material is being implemented. This will allow time to make adjustments that may be useful for other facilitators.
- When planning your observation, be sure to also schedule your debrief with facilitator immediately following the observation or within a few days.
- Schedule two observations of one facilitator, observing two different lessons/modules/activities per year. It is recommended that you try to schedule these observations within a month of each other (2 months at the most).

**Choose the Timing of Implementation Cycles/Sessions to Observe**

Be sure to follow any guidelines required by the setting in which the program is being implemented regarding guests and seek authorization as needed before conducting observation.

- Confirm the implementation date(s) and location(s) with program staff and inform them of the date, time, and location of your planned observation.
- Double check implementation plans with staff as schedules may change.

**Confirm Date and Time a Few Days Before Observation**

**Summary**

*After completing this step, you should know who will conduct the observations, what sessions or activities you want to observe, where you will conduct the observations (population and setting), and when you will conduct the observations.*

Step 2: Prepare for and Conduct the Observation

Prepare to Conduct the Observation

Prepare for your observation by completing the following activities:

 Review the observation tool materials (step-by-step instructions and supporting materials) and participate in Webinar on how to conduct observations.
 Make one copy of the Observation Tool for each session or activity to be observed.
 Review the program lesson or activity you expect to observe.
 Schedule the observation with the facilitator and review the purpose of the observation (to discuss strengths, challenges and solutions regarding program implementation).
 Make arrangements with the facilitator to debrief and discuss the lesson right after the observation or within a few days.

Overview of Observation Tool

The Observation Tool is divided into four areas:

 Classroom Process
  o How well the lesson went overall
  o If lesson objectives met
 Quality of Delivery
  o Facilitator enthusiasm, confidence
  o Extent to which facilitator treated participants respectfully
  o Facilitator’s knowledge of session content
 Perceived Participant Acceptance
  o How interested the participants appeared to be
  o How much participants seemed to like (e.g. trust, respect) the facilitator
 Classroom Management
  o Extent to which facilitator engaged participants throughout session
  o Extent to which facilitator elicited participant involvement and responses
Conduct Observation:

Conducting in-person observations

- Find a location in the room to observe where you will not be a distraction to the facilitator or participants.
- Ask the facilitator to introduce you at the start of the session you are observing, and provide a brief explanation as to why you are observing.

Explore alternative options to conducting observations using technology if you are unable to conduct an in-person observation.

- There are many technologies available to conduct an observation including:
  - Skype
  - Webcams
  - Videotape
- Note: Check with the site for any policies in regards to using web cam or videotaping procedures and make sure you have prior authorization.

Record Notes on the Observation Tool

- Follow the instructions on the tool.
- Watch for aspects of implementation quality that are observable and actionable (those that can be improved upon) using the tool provided.
- Record your notes in the spaces provided.
- Write detailed descriptions of the facilitator’s strengths and challenges, and offer solutions as needed.
- Indicate whether something was observed or not observed per the instructions on the tool.
- Conduct subsequent observations using steps described above.

By the end of this step you should have a complete tool for each observation you conducted.

Summary

Be sure you have:

- Recorded all of your notes on the CQI Observation Tool
- Arranged to debrief with the facilitator immediately after the observation or within a few days.

Ask yourself: Do I have at least two completed observations for each facilitator that I have observed?
Step 3: Debrief and Discuss the Observation

Hold Debrief Session After Each Observation

Ideally, you should arrange to debrief and provide feedback immediately after each observation or within a few days of observation.

Ask Facilitator to Reflect on How the Session Went

As a starting point, ask the facilitator to share his/her observations about the lesson or activity. Ask open-ended questions to encourage conversation, such as:
- What worked well?
- What, if anything, was challenging?
- Are there things you would change if you were teaching this lesson or activity again?
- What did you think of the level of participant engagement this time?
- Is there additional training and/or information on a specific topic that would help you with implementing this session/activity?

Share Key Insights from Observation

Share feedback in a neutral and supportive manner, building from the facilitator’s reflection as appropriate. Review and discuss each area individually.
- Provide feedback about what went well first—reinforce or expand upon what the facilitator noted.
- Discuss key challenges you observed and identify possible solutions jointly with the facilitator.
- Example: I noticed that the youth in the back were very distracted during the lesson. Potential probes:
  - Tell me about those youth. Are there things you have tried in other lessons to help engage participants? What are some strategies you might try to keep them more involved in future lessons?
  - To what extent was that a challenge for you?
- Use role play practice as needed to try out new ways to approach issues that may have surfaced during the observations (e.g., role play how to respond to a student who constantly disrupts class or how to approach a student who always has his/her head on the table during class).
- Always address trainings/information suggested by the facilitator first, and then, discuss potential areas for staff training and program enhancements that may be beneficial for future facilitation (e.g.,
Reinforce Positive Actions, Identify “One to Grow On,” and Explore Other Training Needs

Close the debrief by reviewing what worked well, identifying “one to grow on,” and ideas for additional training (See Debrief Guide table of the tool):

- **What worked well:** Select 1-2 aspects that were positive and worked well. Reinforce those areas.
- **One to grow on:** Agree upon 1-2 key steps the facilitator can take to enhance implementation. These may be large or small, but should be steps that are realistic and achievable, such as moving around more during small group activities or engaging the participants in the back of the room by moving closer to them, etc.). It is best to keep the number of “growth areas” limited to give facilitators time to make changes.
- **Additional training:** If you discussed professional development options during the debrief, make note of next steps to ensure the training occurs.

Debrief after Second Observation

Use the same steps as above. During the 2nd observation, watch for any changes from the “One to grow on” you discussed at the end of the first observation.

- Follow the same debrief process as well, identifying what went well and “one to grow on.”

Use Data to Follow-up on Staff Development Needs

After collecting and reviewing the observation data, take time to think about areas for ongoing training and ways you can support facilitators. Here are some questions to consider:

- What did you learn from the Observation Tool data that may better support facilitators?
- What changes are you most likely to make based on what you learned from the observations to support facilitators and/or the quality of implementation?
- When will you implement the changes and how will you assess them?
- Are there plans for ongoing coaching and feedback for the facilitators?
- What specific skills or training are needed?

Summary

*After completing this step, you should have a sense of what is working well and what areas could be strengthened to support and meet the needs of the facilitators.*

*Ask yourself: What ongoing support or specific skills training is needed to continue to support facilitators?*
Step 4: Report Your Observations

Complete Online CQI Summary Form

Opportunity to reflect on Key insights...
What worked well?
Areas to grow...

After you conduct your observations, you will complete a brief online CQI Observation Tool Summary Form. You will be asked to document information recorded from page one of the CQI Observation Tool as well as information contained in the Observation Debrief Guide (page 8).

- Complete after all observations of the same facilitator have been completed.
- If you observe more than one facilitator, you will be guided to complete a summary form for each one.
- Once completed, you will receive an email confirmation with a pdf of your response as a summary form that can be used for planning efforts and agency records.
- Both your Program Consultant and Evaluation Liaison will also receive a copy of this pdf and may assist you further as needed.

Online CQI Summary Form

To access the online CQI Summary Form, follow this link:


Reporting Requirements

Please contact your MCAH Program Consultant for any additional instructions about reporting your CQI Observation Summary in your Progress Reports.
References/ Literature Cited for tool development

California Adolescent Sexual Health Work Group (ASHWG). Core Competencies for Providers of Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (September, 2008).


Additional Resources on Conducting Observations

*Brief 16: Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation: Observation*

Available at [http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/G3658-5.PDF](http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/G3658-5.PDF)