



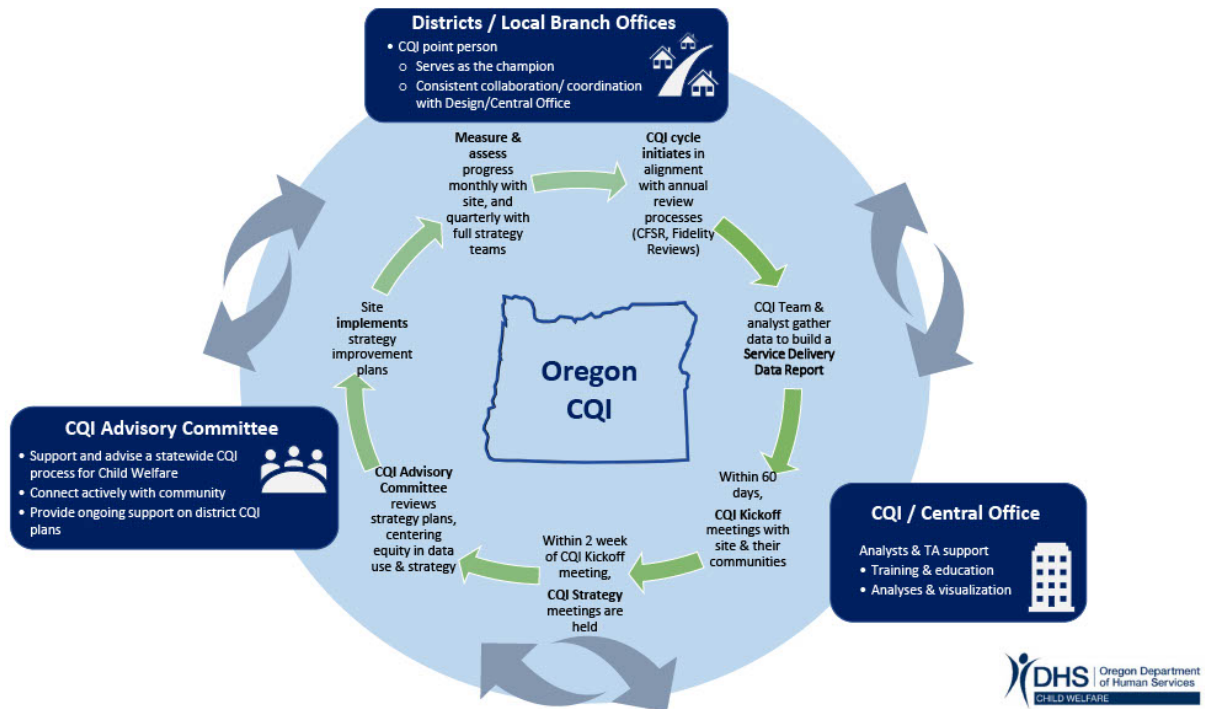
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## How Oregon DHS engages community in Continuous Quality Improvement

“Community really latches onto this data ...we talk about the difference between poverty and neglect, and oversurveillance, bias, institutional racism, and we can tie all of these things together ... in a way that's powerful and easily understood. People understand what it's like to pay rent. They understand what it's like to work a minimum wage job. We've heard caseworkers say wow and then we ask families to do all these services on top of that.”

—Jennifer Ricks, CQI Program Manager, Oregon DHS Child Welfare

In 2020, the [Oregon Department of Human Services \(ODHS\) Child Welfare Division](#) built their statewide Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program within their child welfare agency to focus more explicitly on engaging community members. As a federal requirement of the Child and Family Services Review, CQI is critical to a [well-functioning child protection agency](#) to improve practice and support the best possible outcomes for families. The process took several years of planning and workgroups with external partners, tribal leaders, persons with lived experience with the child welfare system, and community members to design the new approach. ODHS's CQI program centers community voice and equitable services, balances celebrating strengths with the need to be transparent about where improvements are needed, draws on child welfare administrative data and the Community Opportunity Map, and, importantly, lets local offices and their communities drive their own CQI goals rather than a top-down approach. The new CQI program launched in 2022 and was implemented statewide in August 2024.



## Why the Community Opportunity Map

The [Community Opportunity Map](#) allows anyone to find child and family well-being data for any neighborhood across this nation – in order to analyze, plan, and act alongside others to [build Communities of Hope](#). The Community Opportunity Map has 30 indicators across five topic areas — child and family well-being, education, economy, housing, and accessibility (of food, internet, and transportation). The tool uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and several other sources, covering states, counties, Congressional districts, cities, and ZIP codes in all 50 states as well as the Municipios of Puerto Rico. Two-thirds of the indicators can be disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Using the tool, public agencies like the Oregon DHS can create data-informed plans to invest in hope for their constituents.

## CQI gathers communities around data

A CQI kickoff meeting starts the annual process for each site. These 4-hour meetings are open to the public and bring together local office staff, central office staff, people with lived experience with the child welfare system, tribal representatives, court partners, resource caregivers, and residents. The goal of the meeting is for the local office and the community to identify an area for improvement during the CQI cycle. To guide the discussion, a “Service Delivery Data Report” is shared with all participants, telling the story about how children and families are experiencing the service array in the site under review.

The “Service Delivery Data Report,” created by the ODHS CQI team, opens with context about the ODHS CQI process and the Division’s [Vision for Transformation](#), stating that “ODHS Child Welfare cannot identify and solve problems in our service delivery alone and must include insight and involvement from Tribes in Oregon, community partners, and people with lived experience.” The report includes several child and family well-being measures from the Community Opportunity Map — households under 200% poverty, the number of hours per week that a person would need to work to rent a 2-bedroom home at minimum wage, the percentage of families accessing SNAP benefits — to provide important context about why families might be coming to the attention of the child welfare agency and why disparities exist. Finally, the report

provides accessible definitions for key CQI concepts and a wealth of child welfare administrative data on services to keep children together with their families, how well children are served when they are separated from their families, and how quickly children are returned home when separated. By the end of the meeting, participants walk away with a better understanding of the child and family service system in their district and an area to focus on during the CQI cycle.

## Everyone joins in improving practice for families

After the CQI kickoff meeting establishes the outcome measure of the CQI process, the group will meet for a strategy meeting to determine a plan to move forward. The strategy meeting analyzes the chosen topic — through root cause analysis and theory of change — to determine a plan of action to meet the goal for the CQI cycle. For example, a recent goal in one site was around improving ongoing safety plans. The site worked with a team of parent mentors in the office to review a sample of safety plans and provide recommendations from an impacted parent's perspective on how safety planning could be improved at the site. Every action plan must consider how the plan will benefit all families equitably. Once the action plan is created, a statewide CQI Advisory Committee will review the plan to provide feedback and support. The CQI Advisory Committee, mainly made up of non-ODHS staff, comprises a range of CQI-relevant expertise: people with lived experience with the child welfare system, tribal representatives, resource parents, data scientists, other state agency staff, and some child welfare staff. The local office and central CQI team will meet monthly to track progress on the action plan. Every quarter, the local office and community will come back together to review progress on the action steps and change direction as needed, until the cycle begins again each year.

## A commitment to hope through data

ODHS Child Welfare continues its statewide CQI program that engages community members and the entire child and family services community to improve outcomes. At Casey, we believe that hope is an action word and that every one of us from each of the five sectors of community — government, nonprofit, neighborhood, philanthropy, and business — must play our role. With its CQI program, the ODHS Child Welfare partners across the sectors to support young people and build Communities of Hope.

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families in the United States. By working together, we can create a nation where Communities of Hope provide the support and opportunities that children and families need to thrive. Founded in 1966, we work in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and with tribal nations across North America to influence long-lasting improvements to the well-being of children, families and the communities where they live.

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