

# **TYPES AND SOURCES OF DATA & INFORMATION REVIEWED**

## **Types and Sources of Data and Information Reviewed**

The Quality Council reviews quality improvement data collected by the Quality Management Metrics and Analytics Office of LTL for the purpose of making recommendations to the director of QMMA for system remediation and improvement.

The primary source of data is the quarterly quality improvement reports compiled by the QMU staff and based on the monthly data collected at the regional level by the Metrics & Analytics Division, Quality Management Efficiency Unit (QMEUs), Quality and Compliance Unit (QCU) and LTL Program staff.

### **Why is Data Important?**

There is a growing recognition across various fields of endeavor, business, health care, education and government, that objective measurement and analysis of performance can be a powerful management tool. Such objective assessment requires data. While there are potential pitfalls to an over reliance on data, when combined with other approaches to assessment it can provide an excellent means of identifying where change may be needed in a service system as well as what type of change may be the most helpful.

Historically, service systems have relied upon more anecdotal information (e.g., individual cases, problems in a program) to guide change. While valuable, such one-dimensional information is often open to significant bias as it is based upon personal experiences and sometimes isolated incidents. It therefore doesn't always tell the "whole story" or provide a complete "picture" of what is and is not happening. The use of data - if properly analyzed and evaluated - can overcome many of these limitations. It is usually more objective and not as strongly influenced by personal bias. It allows information to be better standardized and therefore comparable across groups of people or service providers. Most importantly it can be organized and analyzed so that we can learn about change, trends, patterns and relationships.

To use data effectively requires that users have a basic understanding of the benefits and limitations of data. This handbook will provide the Quality Council members with some insights into how to understand and appropriately use the data they receive.

## **Balance is Essential**

Just as the use of data can become a powerful tool, it can also be abused and misused. It is critical that any quality system balances the use of data with other methods of inquiry and system improvement. An over-reliance on data can just as easily hide the truth as reveal it. Data can be poorly analyzed, incorrectly interpreted and easily manipulated so that it leads to misleading conclusions. It can also quickly become confusing and overly complicated, resulting in users pushing it aside and falling back on old "tried and true" methods that are wrought with bias and inaccuracy. Or, in an effort to create the "perfect" data-based review system funds and staff can be pulled away from other equally important activities. This can result in many problems such as not strengthening the data-based review component to the quality improvement system. Data should therefore be viewed as a tool for inclusion in a comprehensive system. It is not the "be all-end all" solution to quality improvement.

## **General Rules for Reviewing Data**

While the consistent use of objective data can be a valuable tool in understanding and managing the quality of services it is important to remember that it is not "perfect" and must be used in an intelligent and cautious fashion. It is important to seek balance between data and other sources of information and to approach the review of data with a "questioning" mind. This table of Do's and Don'ts may be helpful.

<b>Do</b>	<b>Do Not</b>
Analyze the analysis	Make assumptions about what the data says
Identify big issues which may influence the data	Consider the data as "significant " unless it is identified as being so
Look at the findings for what they are - do not over generalize	Jump to conclusions without checking other sources
Balance your review with other sources of information	Generalize the findings to all populations or people served by the waivers

## **Validity and Reliability of Data**

In order for data to be truly useful it should be both valid and reliable. **Validity** refers to the extent to which the data is actually measuring what you think it is and whether or not it is logically related to the indicator it is purporting to assess. Different sets of data will vary with regard to their validity. This means that some measures will be very valid and others only somewhat valid. Therefore it is important to look at more than one measure or data set before drawing any firm conclusions, *i.e.*, look for “convergence” of data wherein more than one measure is telling you the same thing.

Reliability is a necessary condition for there to be validity. **Reliability** refers to the extent to which the data you obtain is consistent, both over time and across measurements. Usually problems with reliability occur when the measure or its scoring are ambiguous and not clear, leading to unintended variation in the data. Data collected through surveys are supported with service plan delivery information and service plan review processes in order to assess if participants are receiving needed services with in each program. If QMU only reviews the service plan delivery data, this may lead them to a different conclusion than consideration of all measures.

LTL is working to consistently identify and provide correction to collected data. Metrics & Analytics Division staffs are validating and clarifying data from various data sources. Metrics & Analytics supports the OLTL Bureaus to ensure the data provides accurate information.