

Workforce Certification in Quality Improvement Facilitates a “Culture of Quality” in a Local Public Health Laboratory

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Objective

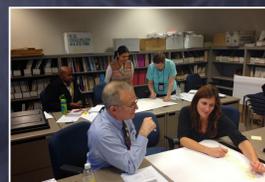
A “Culture of Quality” generally refers to patterns of human activity that give significance and importance to maintaining a high quality of services. The objective of this study was to determine whether offering employees at a local public health laboratory (LPHL) training in the basics of quality improvement can create a “culture of quality” around the administrative tasks that accompany laboratory testing duties.

Study Design

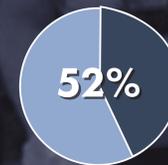
Sixty percent of Milwaukee Health Department Laboratory (MHDL) employees spent 1 week completing coursework for Quality 101, a training program designed by the American Society for Quality (ASQ) to introduce participants to the basics of quality improvement methodology. MHDL employees were trained in the 7 basic quality improvement tools including; cause and effect diagrams, check sheets, control charts, histograms, Pareto charts, scatter diagrams, and run charts. Afterwards, a survey was used to determine their attitudes towards quality improvement projects in the laboratory.

Results

Eighty-percent of Quality 101 attendees continued their studies and became [ASQ] Certified Quality Improvement Associates (CQIAs), which ultimately resulted in 52% of MHDL employees being recognized as CQIAs (Figure 1).



ASQ Training



52% of Milwaukee's Public Health Lab are Certified Quality Improvement Associates.

Figure 1. ASQ Certification. (A) MHDL Employees participated in ASQ's Quality 101, where they learned the 7 Basic Tools of Quality. (B) Over half of the MHDL staff completed Quality 101 and became ASQ-Certified Quality Improvement Associates after certification testing.

The cohort went on to create a “culture of quality” that resulted in the initiation of several 5S projects to promote workspace cleanliness, daily huddle meetings to combat a “section silo” culture, and a primary visual display board that features run charts for workload analysis and “hot-button items” for effective lab communication (Figure 2).



Figure 2. ASQ Certification. (A) MHDL Employees participated in a 5S exercise designed to clean and reorganize our Conference Room, (B) where over 150lbs of unused items were removed and discarded. (C) Every morning the MHDL staff meets for approx. 5min to update each other on the status of lab testing, general administration, safety, and any other pending items.

Conclusions

MHD employees certified in quality improvement increased the quality of communication and morale in the workplace environment. Training and certifying staff scientists in the 7 basic quality tools can inspire a “culture of quality” at a local health department

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by APHL under cooperative agreements #U60CD303019, #1U60HM000803 and #U60HM000803(CFDA#93.065) from the CDC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the APHL, CDC and/or Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response

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