

Quality Improvement Basics

Introduction to Quality Improvement: Processes and Systems

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Objectives



After completing this module, participants will be able to

- Define a process and a system
- Discuss what is meant by systems thinking
- Recognize pros and cons of process and systems thinking

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Processes and Systems

- Process: a standard sequence of steps that are followed in order to complete a task or produce a result.
- System: the environment in which processes are implemented. A system is the combination and relationship between various processes, the people involved, organizational culture, environmental factors, equipment involved (such as electronic health records) and resources available.

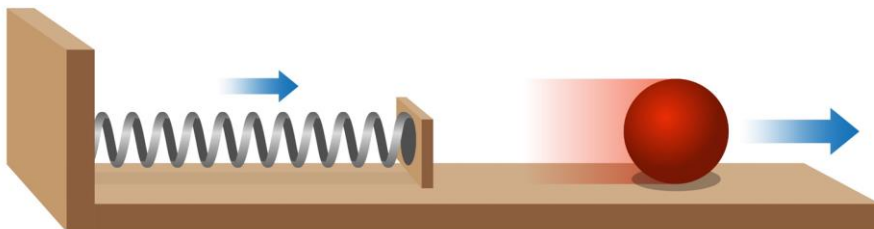
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Processes and Systems cont.

Processes and systems are set up to get exactly the results they get.



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Process Thinking

- Seeing processes
- Teasing out the steps and decision points
- Diagraming the steps in sequence



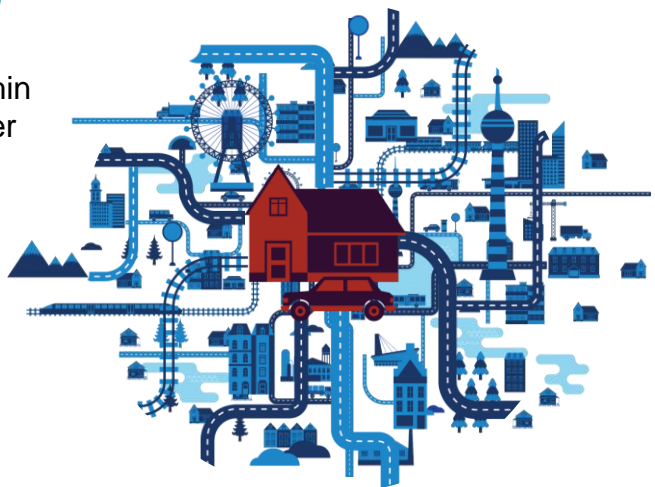
- Finding where improvements can be made

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Systems Thinking

- Understanding how aspects within the system influence one another
- Recognizing that the parts of a system can be best understood through how they relate to each other, rather than in isolation
- Using critical thinking skills to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information
- Having situational awareness



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Pros and Cons of Process and Systems Thinking



Pros

- Systems and processes make or break outcomes and results
- Decreases re-work and improves efficiency

Cons

- Can turn everything into a process
- Get locked in to “This is how we do it”
- Lose flexibility
- Can reduce staff resilience
- Get bogged down in detail

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Pros and Cons of Process and Systems Thinking



Instead of saying,

“This is how we do things around here.”

We need to say,

“This is how we do things around here until we find a better way.”

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Process and Systems Examples

- System: Medical Home (clinic)
 - Process: shared decision making, care plan development
- System: Hospital medication administration
 - Process: orders, dispensing, patient ID verification
- System: Airline safety
 - Process: take-off and landing pilot checklists

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In Summary

- A process is a standard sequence of steps that are followed to complete a task or produce a result.
- A system is the environment in which processes are implemented. A system is the combination and relationship between processes, people, culture, environmental factors, equipment, and resources.
- Systems thinking looks at the big picture – the relationship between the individual part within the system – and realizes change at any point or level may have an impact throughout the system.
- There are potential pitfalls to process and system thinking that can hinder progress or improvements.

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