

10 LESSONS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

- 1. Start with an environmental scan.** Begin improvement projects by developing a strong understanding of relevant regulations, standards, and evidence-based practices. Assess current policies and procedures to identify gaps and other areas for improvement.
- 2. Use technology as a tool for improvement.** Implementing an electronic health record (EHR) system is just the first step. Without utilizing EHR features such as reporting, e-prescribing, and clinical decision support, all you really have is a fancy paper chart. Work with your vendor and quality partners to understand your system's capabilities, and stay up to date on federal health information technology (HIT) "meaningful use" criteria.
- 3. Assess and rebuild your culture to bring about real change.** Assessing leadership practices and organizational culture is an important step in any improvement project.
- 4. Take the time to carefully craft your data measurement tool(s).** Upfront careful consideration of measure design provides downstream data rich with meaning, and can help you target improvement efforts where help is needed most.
- 5. Utilize the expertise of frontline staff.** When making changes, assess workflow and seek input from frontline staff, including help in identifying barriers to implementation.
- 6. Monitor performance on an ongoing basis.** Continually monitor the measures or activities that you want to improve or sustain, and work to understand underlying causes of performance changes. Look for ongoing opportunities to improve workflow and care processes.
- 7. Communicate your quality improvement vision with all staff.** Make quality a team effort by everyone in the organization. Regularly discuss performance results and ongoing efforts with staff.
- 8. Build partnerships whenever possible.** More can be accomplished through teamwork and collaboration than by independent efforts. Share resources and ideas with partners with overlapping goals, and take advantage of collaborative learning opportunities.
- 9. Promote an environment of open communication.** Encourage constructive criticism and meaningful dialogue, and be prepared to engage in crucial conversations with parties that may be resistant to or defiant of change.
- 10. Celebrate achievements and landmarks.** Keep everyone engaged and motivated by focusing on positive outcomes and celebrating staff successes throughout the quality initiative.