

## Quality Improvement (QI)-Driven Approaches to Reducing Health Disparities

This edition highlights the achievements of the Quality Improvement (QI) Council and explores using QI to advance health equity. In recognition of LGBTQ Pride Month, Juneteenth, and Men's Health Month, all observed in June, we are sharing resources with strategies for addressing health disparities, which can be effectively implemented using the [PDSA \(Plan-Do-Study-Act\)](#) method.

QI methods are effective in addressing health disparities among specific populations, as they provide a proven structure for identifying and strategically addressing the root causes of disparities. QI supports using targeted best practices with data to test and then implement effective interventions. Below are some resources for strategies to address disparities.

### LGBTQ+ Health



[LGBTQ Pride Month](#) is celebrated every June, commemorating the Stonewall protests of 1969 and celebrating LGBTQ+ rights and visibility. This observance underscores the need for health departments to prioritize LGBTQ+ health in improvement initiatives. Disparities in health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people highlight the urgent need for targeted improvement efforts. Discrimination, stigma, and lack of culturally competent services remain significant barriers to equitable healthcare access.

**Learn more about reducing LGBTQ+ health disparities [here](#).**

### Racial Minority Health

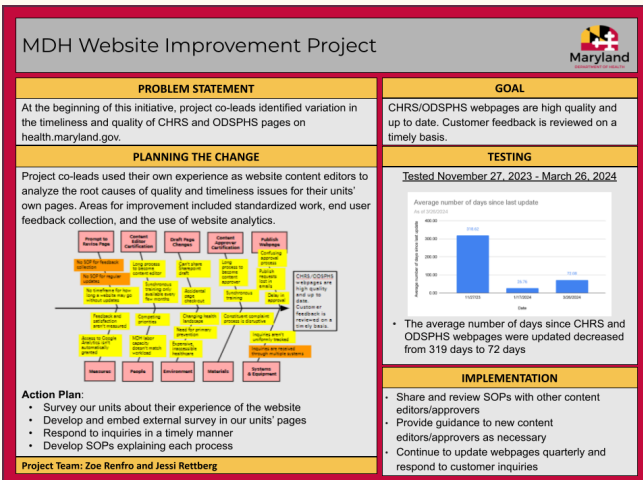
[Juneteenth](#) is observed on June 19, to commemorate the end of slavery in the U.S. on June 19, 1865. As we commemorate Juneteenth, we reflect on the long-lasting impact of racism on health outcomes. Historically marginalized communities still experience inequitable access to healthcare, resulting in pervasive disparities. Engaging with underserved communities, and tailoring interventions to their unique challenges, is crucial.

**Learn more about reducing racial disparities [here](#).**

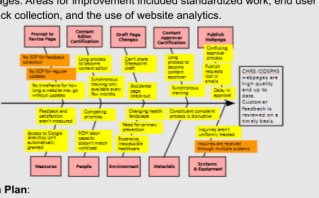

### Men's Health

[Men's Health Month](#) raises awareness of men's issues and encourages action to improve them. Persisting disparities in men's health outcomes such as higher rates of chronic diseases, lower healthcare utilization, and lower utilization of mental health services, underscore the need for targeted efforts to address men's health. QI initiatives can effectively address men's health disparities, such as enhancing screening for prostate cancer, improving cardiovascular health, and increasing preventive health services.

**Learn more about improving Men's Health Month [here](#)**



**MDH Website Improvement Project**

PROBLEM STATEMENT	GOAL
At the beginning of this initiative, project co-leads identified variation in the timeliness and quality of CHRS and ODSPHS pages on health.maryland.gov.	CHRS/ODSPHS webpages are high quality and up to date. Customer feedback is reviewed on a timely basis.
PLANNING THE CHANGE	TESTING
Project co-leads used their own experience as website content editors to analyze the root causes of quality and timeliness issues for their units' own pages. Areas for improvement included standardized work, end user feedback collection, and the use of website analytics.	Tested November 27, 2023 - March 26, 2024
	 <p>The average number of days since CHRS and ODSPHS webpages were updated decreased from 319 days to 72 days</p>
Action Plan:	IMPLEMENTATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Survey our units about their experience of the website</li><li>Develop and embed external survey in our units' pages</li><li>Respond to inquiries in a timely manner</li><li>Develop SOPs explaining each process</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Share and review SOPs with other content editors/approvers</li><li>Provide guidance to new content editors/approvers as necessary</li><li>Continue to update webpages quarterly and respond to customer inquiries</li></ul>

Project Team: Zoe Renfro and Jessi Rettberg

### QI Council Success

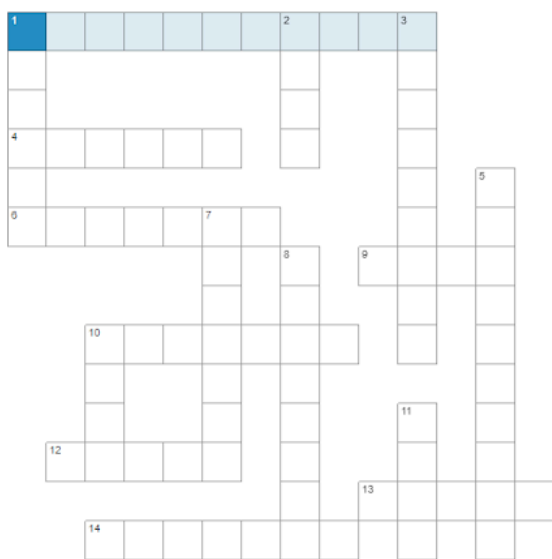
The QI Council has been working to enhance staff's QI competencies, to infuse QI practices throughout the organization, leading to a culture of continuous improvement. The council has participated in QI training and received project support to achieve this. QI Council projects include:

- Reducing Maryland Drug Assistance program's eligibility determination time
- Improving HIV Case management competencies
- MDH Website Improvement
- Improving the evaluation capacity for the Overdose Data to Action program
- Reducing processing time for Local Health department Grant renewals
- Enhancing PHS performance management
- Improving PHS onboarding

**Click the storyboard to learn about the MDH website improvement project**

### QI Crossword Puzzle

Click [HERE](#) to complete this QI fundamentals crossword puzzle



Quality Improvement Puzzle  
Powered by [PuzzleMe™](#)

#### ACROSS

- 1 To establish a standard (11 letters).
- 4 A numeric objective driving activities (6 letters).
- 6 To regularly check and observe the status or progress (7 letters).
- 9 A QI methodology minimizing waste (4 letters).
- 10 A sequence of steps taken to achieve a particular outcome (7 letters).
- 12 Any activity that doesn't add value for the customer (5 letters).
- 13 What the customer is willing to pay for in Lean terminology (5 letters).
- 14 To quantify elements of a process to evaluate performance (7 letters).

#### DOWN

- 1 A set of components working together toward a common goal (6 letters).
- 2 Factual information used for analysis (4 letters).
- 3 Optimal productivity with minimum waste (9 letters).
- 5 Ongoing, often in the context of improvement (10 letters)
- 7 The result or effect of a process or activity (7 letters).
- 8 The end-user or recipient of a product or service (8 letters).
- 10 A four-step model for carrying out change and continuous improvement (4 letters).
- 11 The broad intended impact determining objectives (4 letters).

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