NAQC’s Quality Initiative is dedicated to working with the NAQC membership and other partners to develop measures most important to establishing quality for quitlines.

Introduction
For nearly four years the Consortium has been engaged in collaborative activities to share and improve our knowledge of evidence-based practice in quitline operations and services. It should come as no surprise to members that with the 2008 Quality Initiative we are once again embarking on a process in which we have an opportunity to take a huge step forward. We envision that this huge step will ultimately result in the creation of standard methods for data collection and data reporting.

With the growing number of quitlines and their increasing sophistication, the need for a deeper level of dialogue about quality improvement is clear. Ultimately, we hope that our 2008 Quality Initiative will make individual quitline efforts more meaningful by creating standards that allow quitlines to work collaboratively toward measuring quality and developing an understanding of how to improve quality.

Our goal is that by the close of the calendar year, we will have completed up to four white papers that will serve as cornerstones of the Consortium’s future quality work. One paper will be dedicated to describing a framework for guiding quality measurement in quitlines. This paper will focus on outlining the outcomes and related processes critical to quitline quality that are under the influence of both quitline partners—funders and service providers. The goal of the additional two to three papers will be to outline recommendations on standard measurements of particular outcomes and standard methods for data collection and reporting for these outcomes.

Process
NAQC is dedicating several calls in this year’s conference call series to the Quality Initiative (see below for updated conference call calendar). Our goal will be to either solicit input or feedback via the conference calls as well as to offer other means by which members will contribute to our progress and ensure we are meeting the needs of those we serve. We will also be sending regular updates so that you remain up-to-date on this important work.

Members will play an important role in this initiative, as will the NAQC Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is made up of 21 members who represent all of our stakeholder groups from both the U.S. and Canada. Input and feedback from members will be taken to the Advisory Council and will inform their recommendations. Below is a “sketch” of the Quality Initiative process and timeline:

February 2008
- Conference calls with members to gather input on the outcomes to focus on in Year One (call highlights outlined below).

March 2008
- Meeting of Advisory Council to determine final white paper topics; provide recommendations of white paper authors; and agree on white paper review and approval process outlined by NAQC staff. Member input shared.

April – June 2008
- Authors hired and papers in progress.

July 1, 2008
- Drafts of first two outcomes papers delivered to NAQC and distributed to members.

July 9 and 11, 2008
- Conference calls with members to review drafts; introduce feedback survey (specific questions on surveymonkey) and instructions/deadline; and allow for comment/feedback by phone.

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Quality Initiative Update
February 2008

Mid-August 2008
- Feedback from members compiled.
- In-person Advisory Council meeting:
  - Authors of first two outcomes papers to present papers.
  - Member feedback shared with author and advisory council.
  - Framework paper discussion/brainstorming.

September 2008
- Revisions made and framework paper developed.

October 13, 2008
- Draft framework paper due and sent to Advisory Council for review.

Early November 2008
- In-person Advisory Council meeting:
  - Final outcomes papers approved.
  - Draft framework paper presented by author and feedback provided by Advisory Council.

November and Early December 2008
- Revisions to framework paper.

Mid-December 2008
- Presentation of framework paper to members by Advisory Council.

Our First Call With Members, February 6 and 8, 2008
In lieu of lengthy call summaries that highlight the information shared and the questions and answers discussed during the conference call series, we will be providing monthly updates to members on the status of the Quality Initiative. Our first calls with members were held on February 6 and 8 and the purpose was to provide an overview of outcomes and quality and to gather input on the outcomes most important to focus on in the first year. While a white paper outlining a quality framework for quitlines and one addressing “reach” have been promised to our funders, we wanted to check in with members about additional outcomes in need of attention.

Following an outstanding primer on outcomes and quality by Stephen Michael, MS, director of the Arizona Smokers’ Helpline at the University of Arizona, the floor was opened for comments and questions from members.

The following themes emerged in the discussions from both days:

Addressing the balance between quality and quantity:
- How does a service provider adjust quality measures to allow for a sudden, significant increase in call volume?
- When a significant increase in volume occurs, which quality measures are “thrown out” and in what order?
- Importance of relationship between funder and service provider in ensuring honest communication about this balance.

The issue of measuring and reporting of quit rates:
- Is “quit rate” the most appropriate measure of program success when dealing with a chronic condition? Should we be focusing on a different, more telling or realistic measure?
- What goes into these calculations?
- Risk adjustment issues: how the populations being served impacts quit rates.

Measuring “reach”:
- What are we really measuring – ensuring standard definitions and measures.
• The importance of broadening this measure to include impact.
• Quality vs. quantity also an important issue here.

Developing a standard definition of call volume so that all quitlines are using the same measure when reporting volume of callers.

The overarching take-away message from members is that we need to develop a certain number of measurements that we agree to all define and do in the same way so that eventually benchmarking on these outcomes is possible. Participants agreed with the approach of focusing on a framework for quality and two outcomes in the first year of this project. Reach and quit rate were most frequently mentioned as the outcomes to select.

This input, along with additional comments made on the evaluation and feedback survey that participants were asked to complete after the call, will be presented to the Advisory Council during their first meeting on March 10, 2008.

Updated Conference Call Calendar

March 5: 3:30 - 5PM ET and March 7: 12:30 - 2PM ET
“2006 Annual Survey of Quitlines”
Yearly since 2004, NAQC has conducted an Annual Survey of Quitlines in North America. During this conference call, members will learn about the process used to conduct the 2006 NAQC Annual Survey, hear the results of the survey and understand how the data is being used to inform quitline research and practice. We will conclude the conference call with a look ahead to the planning and preliminary timing for the NAQC 2008 Survey.

April 9: 3:30 - 5PM ET and April 11: 12:30 - 2PM ET
TO BE DETERMINED

May 7: 3:30 - 5PM ET and May 9: 12:30 - 2PM ET
“Quitlines and Chronic Disease Programs: Partnership and Practices”
In a partnership project to build relationship between quitlines and chronic disease programs, NAQC will join with the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors to share results from a Consortium-wide survey, highlight successful linkages between quitlines and chronic disease programs and offer guidance on working better together.

June 4: 3:30 - 5PM ET and June 6: 12:30 - 2PM ET
TO BE DETERMINED

July 9: 3:30 - 5PM ET and July 11: 12:30 - 2PM ET
“DRAFT Outcomes White Papers #1 and #2: Feedback from our Members”
Drafts of two outcomes white papers will be presented during this call. Members will be asked to provide constructive feedback that will later be shared with Advisory Council members and authors. Members will also be asked to provide constructive feedback that will later be shared with Advisory Council members and authors. Members will also be provided with instructions and timeline for providing additional feedback via a surveymonkey feedback form.

August 6: 3:30 - 5PM ET and August 8: 12:30 - 2PM ET
TO BE DETERMINED

Please direct questions and/or comments related to the NAQC Quality Initiative Project to Tamatha Thomas-Haase at tthomas-haase@naquitline.org.

About the North American Quitline Consortium: NAQC is a Phoenix, Arizona-based 501(3)(c) organization that seeks to promote evidence based quitline services across diverse communities in North America.