

Myths About Process Improvement

In its most basic form, process improvement involves developing a new way to look at how your clinic can do what it does even better. Specifically, it consists of utilizing a systematic framework to improve key aspects of an organization. When implementing a process improvement project, you will take a series of actions to identify, analyze and improve existing practices. Process improvement requires a sustained focus on what you're trying to improve, with a goal of continuous improvement. This fact sheet discusses some of the beliefs that may be maintained about process improvement and works to correct these myths.

MYTH: "IRB approval is required."

FACT: The DoD fully allows for routine process improvement. In fact, most MTFs have mandated that regular process improvement projects be conducted so that there is continuous improvement of your clinic's services. With this in mind, process improvement is both viewed favorably and does not require IRB review.



MYTH: "Storing process improvement information in a spreadsheet or database is not allowed."

FACT: As long as you safeguard any protected health information, just as you would on other electronic platforms, you can collect and store information about your clinic or program in a spreadsheet or database.

MYTH: "It is permissible to share the results of process improvement outside the chain of command."

FACT: When a clinic conducts a process improvement project that shows positive results, it may be tempting to share that information outside the chain of command, such as at a conference. However, this is only allowable if you seek and secure IRB approval to use the data for these purposes. If your intention is to ultimately publish the results of the process improvement project for a wider audience, you should seek IRB approval before initiating the evaluation. It is not permissible to seek IRB approval on the back end of a project after the evaluation has already been conducted.

MYTH: "Process improvement is a large undertaking that requires too much time and resources."

FACT: Most military behavioral health clinics have been feeling the pinch from doing more with less. As a result, it may be tempting to refrain from process improvement projects due to thinking it will take too much time and resources. However, most process improvement projects do not require a significant amount of time and effort to implement, and as we've already mentioned, they do not require lengthy approval processes. Ultimately, process improvement projects aim to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of a clinic, which will serve as a significant benefit to the clinic, providers, and patients.