

Continuous Quality Improvement Toolkit

A Resource for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Awardees

Module 7: Fishbone Diagram

A Fishbone Diagram (also known as an Ishikawa or cause and effect diagram) provides a visual depiction of the potential causes for a known problem. This helps detect areas with the greatest variability and opportunity for improvement.

Use the Fishbone Diagram template to identify potential root causes for a problem of interest. These four steps will aid in this process.

1. State the problem and include it at the head of the diagram.
2. Identify the main categories that contribute to the problem. Using these categories, label the ribs of the fish.
3. Use the Brainstorming or the 5 Whys techniques to identify causes. Place the causes on the lines connected to the ribs.
4. Analyze the causes and determine which ones to investigate further or where to focus the next PDSA cycle.

