Keys to Sustaining Change – Capacity Building

The development of ongoing systems to ensure these key factors are in place are critical for an organization to move beyond performing quality improvement as isolated activities, to a state of continuously implemented improvement activities, embedded in the organizational work ethic.

Capacity building refers to the ongoing process of ensuring that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their quality improvement responsibilities and that they know when and how to best use these skills. Essential capacity-building activities include:

- **Provision of basic QI expertise** - Institutionalization of quality improvement requires that a critical mass of health providers and managers receive initial and continuing knowledge and skill development in QI techniques and methods. As appropriate, the ability to manage quality improvement activities would also be included. Staff needs will evolve over time, and thus, training should be tailored to these evolving quality improvement responsibilities and related training needs. Experience has shown that it is most effective to train staff and providers at the time of direct need for information, when they can immediately use it (just-in-time training).

- **On-going coaching** - Coaching provides ongoing technical and qualitative support to facilitate the behavior changes needed to undertake and sustain quality improvement activities, while simultaneously encouraging the development of a "culture of quality." The term coach refers to an individual who is well-versed in quality improvement techniques and principles and can provide on-the-job technical support to staff implementing quality improvement activities.

- **Supervision** - Staff also need day-to-day support and correction as they undertake quality improvement activities. Supportive supervision requires enhancing the facilitating role of the supervisor, assuring that supervisors have a foundation of QI expertise, as well as teaching supervisors how to observe, give feedback, and assess a situation.

Improving quality of health care is really more than the simple application of technical methods. It often requires behavior change, learning to work differently. Traditional approaches to capacity building through one-time classroom training are not adequate to achieve behavior change. Alternative modes of learning, such as participatory adult learning and mentored on-the-job practice, are more appropriate for quality improvement capacity building.