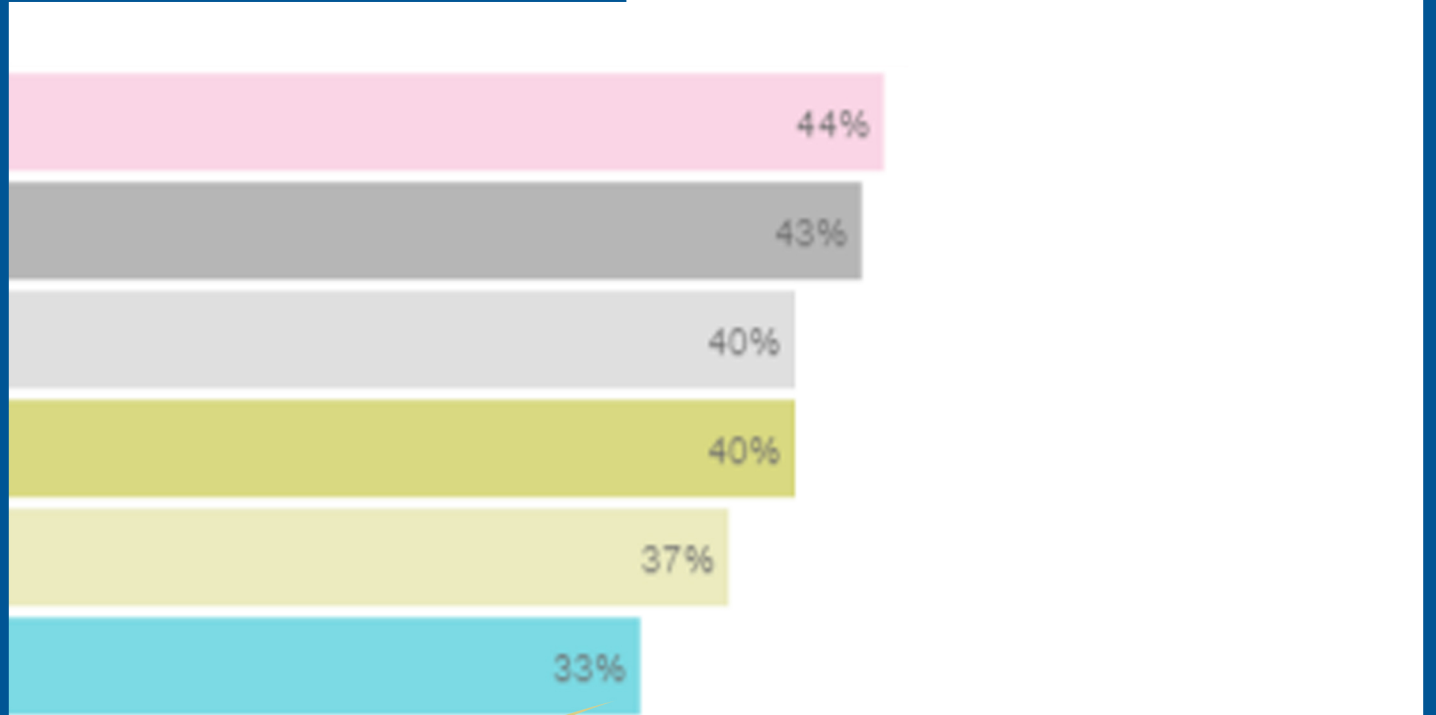


12 REASONS  
why data  
is  
important



## INTRODUCTION

If you work in human services because you hate math, terms like “data,” “quantitative analysis,” or “pivot table” might sound scary. Don’t be intimidated! Data does not have to be complicated. Simply stated, data is useful information that you collect to support organizational decision-making and strategy. The list below shares twelve reasons why data is important, what you can do with it, and how it relates to the human services field.

### 1. IMPROVE PEOPLE’S LIVES

Data will help you to improve quality of life for people you support: Improving quality is first and foremost among the reasons why organizations should be using data. By allowing you to measure and take action, an effective data system can enable your organization to improve the quality of people’s lives.



Customers don't measure how hard you tried,  
they measure you on what **you deliver.**

*-Steve Jobs*



### 2. MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Data = Knowledge. Good data provides indisputable evidence, while anecdotal evidence, assumptions, or abstract observation might lead to wasted resources due to taking action based on an incorrect conclusion.



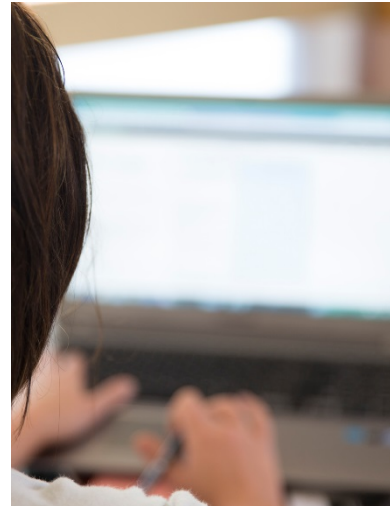
The goal is turn data into information  
and information **into insight.**

*-Carly Fiorina*



### 3. STOP MOLEHILLS FROM TURNING INTO MOUNTAINS

Data allows you to monitor the health of important systems in your organization: By utilizing data for quality monitoring, organizations are able to respond to challenges before they become full-blown crises. Effective quality monitoring will allow your organization to be proactive rather than reactive and will support the organization to maintain best practices over time.



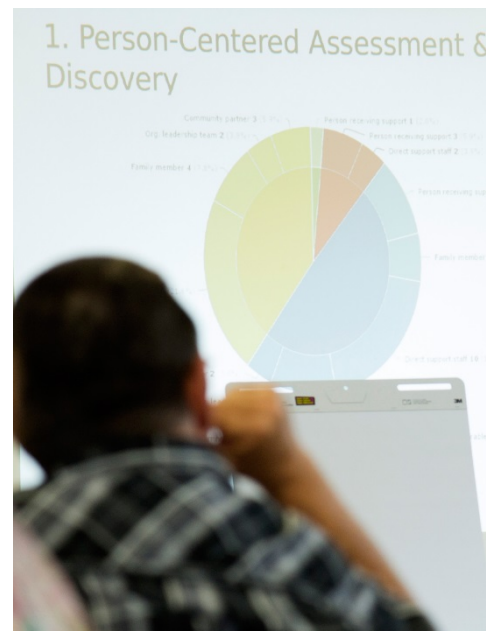
### 4. GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT

Data allows organizations to measure the effectiveness of a given strategy: When strategies are put into place to overcome a challenge, collecting data will allow you to determine how well your solution is performing, and whether or not your approach needs to be tweaked or changed over the long-term.

“ You can't manage what you **don't** measure. ”  
- Peter Drucker

### 5. FIND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

Data allows organizations to more effectively determine the cause of problems. Data allows organizations to visualize relationships between what is happening in different locations, departments, and systems. If the number of medication errors has gone up, is there an issue such as staff turnover or vacancy rates that may suggest a cause? Looking at these data points side-by-side allows us to develop more accurate theories, and put into place more effective solutions.



### 6. BACK UP YOUR ARGUMENTS

Data is a key component of systems advocacy. Utilizing data will help you present a strong argument for systems change. Whether you are advocating for increased funding from public or private sources, or making the case for changes in regulation, illustrating your argument through the use of data will allow you to demonstrate why changes are needed.



## 7. STOP THE GUESSING GAME

Data will help you explain (both good and bad) decisions to your stakeholders. Whether or not your strategies and decisions have the outcome you anticipated, you can be confident that you developed your approach based not upon guesses, but good solid data.

## 8. BE STRATEGIC IN YOUR APPROACHES

Data increases efficiency. Effective data collection and analysis will allow you to direct scarce resources where they are most needed. If an increase in significant incidents is noted in a particular service area, this data can be dissected further to determine whether the increase is widespread or isolated to a particular site. If the issue is isolated, training, staffing, or other resources can be deployed precisely where they are needed, as opposed to system-wide. Data will also support organizations to determine which areas should take priority over others.

## 9. KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING WELL

Data allows you to replicate areas of strength across your organization. Data analysis will support you to identify high-performing programs, service areas, and people. Once you identify your high-performers, you can study them in order to develop strategies to assist programs, service areas and people that are under-performing.

## 10. KEEP TRACK OF IT ALL

Good data allows organizations to establish baselines, benchmarks, and goals to keep moving forward. Because data allows you to measure, you will be able to establish baselines, find benchmarks and set performance goals. A baseline is what a certain area looks like before a particular solution is implemented. Benchmarks establish where others are at in a similar demographic, such as Personal Outcome Measures® national data. Collecting data will allow your organization to set goals for performance and celebrate your successes when they are achieved.

POM01. Are Safe: Environments - Live		
Value	Count	
Yes	2705 91.2%	<div style="width: 91.2%; height: 15px; background-color: #0056b3;"></div>
No	260 8.8%	<div style="width: 8.8%; height: 15px; background-color: #a6c9ec;"></div>
<b>TOTAL</b>		2965

## 11. MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR MONEY

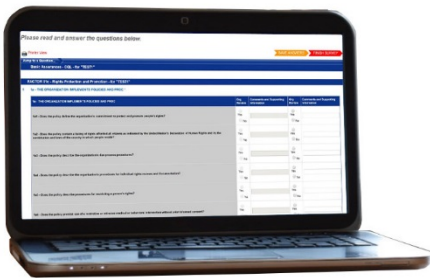
Funding is increasingly outcome and data-driven. With the shift from funding that is based on services provided to funding that is based on outcomes achieved, it is increasingly important for organizations to implement evidence-based practices and develop systems to collect and analyze data.

## 12. ACCESS THE RESOURCES AROUND YOU

Your organization probably already has most of the data and expertise you need to begin analysis. Your HR office probably already tracks data regarding your staff. You are probably already reporting data regarding incidents to your state oversight agency. You probably have at least one person in your organization who has experience with Excel. But, if you don't do any of these things, there is still hope! There are lots of free resources online that can get you started. Do a web search for "how to analyze data" or "how to make a chart in Excel."

## PORTAL DATA SYSTEM – [www.c-q-l.org/PORTAL](http://www.c-q-l.org/PORTAL)

Along with accessing the resources around you, there are external tools that offer data collection, management, and analysis capabilities. CQL has developed the PORTAL Data System to support organizations in reporting, tracking, analyzing, and logging personal outcomes and supports for people receiving services. This system encompasses CQL's internationally-recognized Personal Outcome Measures® and Basic Assurances®, to collect and evaluate quality of life areas including health, safety, social roles, rights, relationships, community integration, employment and so much more.



- Collecting and analyzing data
- Development of annual reports
- Identifying priority areas for strategic planning
- Comparative analysis across local, state and national levels
- Reporting to donors, executive leadership, Board of Directors, governmental agencies, etc.
- Demonstrating ROI for fundraising campaigns, organizational initiatives, programmatic decisions, etc.
- Tracking of ongoing quality enhancement efforts and supports being provided
- Evaluating progress throughout the CQL Accreditation process



## ABOUT CQL

---

CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to the definition, promotion, measurement, and improvement of personal and community quality of life for people with disabilities, people with mental health diagnoses and older adults. CQL provides accreditation, training, certification, consultation, and data management for human service organizations and governmental systems.

## VISION

---

A world of dignity, opportunity, and community for all people.

## MISSION

---

CQL is dedicated to the definition, measurement, and improvement of personal quality of life.

## OUR WORK

---

For over 45 years, CQL has demonstrated international leadership in developing progressive measures and indicators of quality in services and supports, personal quality of life outcome measures, and measures of recovery and social capital. We provide a range of services, products and tools to enhance the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to achieve person-centered excellence.

**CQL achieves its mission by working in partnership with public and private organizations:**

- Develops and implements performance indicators and improvement methods based on the principles of self-direction, recovery, community and personal quality of life
- Provides consultation and education to build individual and organizational capacity for person-centered excellence
- Conducts research and disseminates information on person-centered excellence and personal quality of life to enhance decision making and policy development
- Provides access to information, innovation and emerging ideas in person-centered excellence, quality of life and quality of service

**Mary Kay Rizzolo**

President and CEO

CQL | The Council on Quality and Leadership

[mkrizzolo@thecouncil.org](mailto:mkrizzolo@thecouncil.org)

[www.c-q-l.org](http://www.c-q-l.org)