

Worksheet F: Root-Cause Analysis

- The root cause analysis allows you to identify the “root” of the problem; where and why the problem exists.
- You can then make decisions based on data rather than “hunches” and look for lasting solutions rather than relying on “quick fixes” and “band-aid” approaches.

1. Begin with brainstorming:

- All factors of the problem are considered. “We don’t assess for pain because...”
- Once all factors are listed and developed, they should be categorized.
- Then you can create a “cause and effect” diagram, such as a Fishbone Diagram (explained below).
- General categories for causes are: Environment, Equipment, People, Methods (Processes) and Materials.

2. The Fishbone Diagram

- The cause and effect diagram (Fishbone) starts with the problem at the head of the fish.
- Under each general category of the Fishbone, answer the question, “why?” in regards to the problem identified.
- Once the Fishbone Diagram is done, the various causes are discussed to determine the root of the problem – or the *real* reasons why the problem exists. It is from the result of this discussion that the focus for the improvement plan begins.

3. Other quality improvement tools

- The fishbone diagram is only one example of a quality improvement tool to help you assess your process.
- You may also want to use flow charts or post-it notes to “flow” your process and identify gaps in process.

