



The Center for Quality Improvement & Innovation (CQII) congratulates Wanda Curbelo, LND for her outstanding leadership in quality improvement (QI). We are honored to present her with CQII's 2024 Award for Leadership in QI.

Wanda has a multitude of experiences including 31 years in nutritional care (both inpatient and outpatient settings), 26 years in QI, and mostly recently eight years in ambulatory HIV care as the QI Program Manager for Centro Ararat, Inc. (Ponce, Puerto Rico). She began her QI journey in inpatient care services preparing organizations for The Joint Commission and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services compliance visits. At Centro Ararat, she transformed the quality team into a fully functional and effective clinical quality management (CQM) program. Wanda currently coordinates the CQM program and assists organizational leaders to guide, endorse, support, and champion improvement efforts.

Wanda Curbelo, LND
Quality Improvement Program Manager

Wanda has played a crucial role in the quality teams for the San Juan, Puerto Rico Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Part A and Puerto Rico RWHAP Part B as well as the Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) initiative: *Integration of Buprenorphine into HIV Primary Care Settings* (2017-2019). She is also involved in improving the healthcare experiences of transgender people. When Centro Ararat opened Translucent Clinic (special clinic for transgender people), Wanda provided a training about clinical QI and guided the development of the CQM team. For RWHAP Part C, she has led several QI projects including the development of patient satisfaction surveys that resulted in lowering pneumocystis pneumonia prophylaxis (PCP) rates, standardizing individualized case management care plans, and increasing the number of people with HIV who have been screened for cervical cancer from 20% to 72%. An ongoing SPNS initiative focused improving the healthcare and psychosocial needs of people aging with HIV greatly benefits from her comprehensive involvement in every aspect of implementation and intervention. To enhance data quality, she also trains trainers to optimize internal data input processes.

When speaking with Wanda, she shares that “*one of the greatest challenges in her QI journey was not having nursing credentials.*” She noted that ever since starting in QI a nursing background is often required to be hired in clinical QI roles in Puerto Rico. However, this did not stop her from becoming a regional QI champion and leader. When Wanda began at Centro Ararat, the quality department was a team of one. There are six clinics within Centro Ararat and QI meetings were originally only being held at one of the clinics. Wanda created QI teams at all

six clinics and expanded the QI program by implementing dedicated meetings, a structured framework, and fostering continuous growth including the recent addition of a quality coordinator for the department.

Wanda shared that *“the secret to her QI leadership success is to be a mentor, coach, and guide to others on the team.”* She stated that it is important to hear everyone’s ideas and make everyone feel involved in QI. *“Everybody wins with good quality.”*

Wanda has been part of CQII’s Learning Labs and participates in CQII’s 2024 Quality Fellowship Program to share her knowledge in QI. In 2022, she was invited by CQII to present on the implementation of her project in "PROMs (Patients-Reported Outcomes Measures) 100 million Healthier Lives Well-Being Assessment” at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Expert Meeting. She also presented "Leveraging Data for Clinical Quality Improvement" at the National Latinx Conference in 2022. Wanda presented "Falling in Love with Clinical Quality Management - Brighten up a CQM Program to Improve Staff and Consumer Commitment" at the 2018 National Ryan White Conference.

Wanda shared that during her first training on quality concepts at Centro Ararat she informed her team that *“quality is not about being a ‘policeman’ or a ‘gossip girl,’ it is about working, improving, listening, and sharing ideas, to better serve our clients.”*

Wanda is now referred to as the “Quality Queen” within Centro Ararat. She lives and breathes QI, making it a part of her everyday routine. Whether she's cooking, baking, or cleaning, she often uses fishbone diagrams and makes fun analogies when teaching or working with others to explain key quality concepts in a way so that people can understand. Wanda encourages *“anyone new to QI not to be afraid, to stay open to learning, and to keep it fun.”*

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