

Using PICM for quality improvement and assessment preparation

PICM is a mnemonic for a methodology designed to help assessors undertake assessments for accreditation against the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards.

What is PICM?

PICM is a mnemonic for a methodology that was designed to provide structure when assessing implementation of national safety and quality standards. It stands for:

P	Process
I	Improvement
C	Consumer participation
M	Monitoring

The PICM methodology can be applied to the assessment of a primary and community healthcare service to the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards (Primary and Community Healthcare Standards). It helps assessors conduct a thorough evaluation of the safety and quality systems in place.

Why do you need to know about PICM?

PICM can be used as a tool to help primary and community healthcare services to prepare for on-site and virtual assessments.

Reflecting on, or asking members of the workforce, questions against each of the four elements described in PICM can help to identify gaps and areas for improvement.

This ensures that what is happening in practice aligns with specified policies and protocols, and that strategies for quality improvement are being implemented. Information about assessments, rules and policies relating to accreditation are available on the Commission's [website](#).

How do you use PICM?

Select a process or system linked to an action in the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards. Reflect on questions about the four PICM elements to help identify strengths and weaknesses of safety and quality systems and where improvement is needed.

Where there is more than one person in a healthcare service, other members of the workforce may be asked. Members of the workforce are not expected to know the answers to all questions, however, they would be expected to know the information that is relevant to their role in that process or system.

PICM - Process

When evaluating a particular process, it is important to ensure that members of the workforce:

- are aware of the process
- understand the elements of the process
- know what their role and responsibilities are, as well as the roles of others involved
- know where to find information about the process.

Examples of questions you could ask

- How does this process work in the healthcare service?
- Is the process documented? How do you access this information?
- Who is responsible for the different parts of the process?
- How do you know the process is being used?
- Are there places or times when this process is not used? Why?
- Are there specific qualifications required to be able to carry out the process?
- Are you confident the information on this process is up to date and accurate?
- Can I see evidence of practice?

PICM - Improvement

In order to implement change, it is important for members of the workforce to be aware of, and participate in, quality improvement strategies, and for results and recommendations to be reported. It is important to ensure that members of the workforce:

- identify and prioritise areas for change
- participate in making required changes
- receive information on changes and updates made to the process
- participate in evaluating the effectiveness of changes.

Examples of questions you could ask

- Has the process been reviewed? If so, when?
- How do you determine if changes are needed?
- How would you know if changes were made?
- Who is responsible for making the changes?
- Have the changes been fully implemented?
- How do you know if the change has been effective?

PICM - Consumers

Consumers are at the centre of the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards. Consumers are partners in their own care and partners in the planning, design, monitoring, and evaluation of primary and community healthcare services. Assessments review how effectively patients, carers, families and consumers are incorporated and supported in these processes.

Examples of questions you could ask

- What feedback do you collect from consumers on the service?
- How are consumers informed about or involved in designing, improving, or evaluating the process?
- How do you provide consumers with feedback on this process?
- What reports do you provide to consumers on the outcomes of this process?
- Do you collect feedback from consumers on this process? How?

PICM - Monitoring

It is important to check that implemented processes are monitored to:

- identify areas of under- and high-performance
- prioritise areas for improvement
- measure process compliance and effectiveness
- measure changes over time
- evaluate the effectiveness of changes that are introduced.

Examples of questions you could ask

- How is this process monitored? Where is this documented?
- How would you know if the process is not being used or not working?
- Who is responsible for collecting and reviewing data?
- Can you describe what prompted the process to be changed?

For more information

Contact the Safety and Quality Advice Centre by emailing advicecentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or calling 1800 304 056.

© Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care 2025