

Root Cause Analysis - The 5 Whys Process

Stage C – The Root Cause

Example 1 shows a Team's discussion that gets as far as the 3rd Why. At this point, educators on the Team realize that this problem can be addressed within the implementation of a more career-based high school program the district has recently adopted. The Team 'just knew' they had reached a root cause after the 3rd Why. In this example, teacher training is already being planned, providing a viable opportunity for agency partners to participate in staff development. Since the Team is multi agency, they can add important content to the teacher training about adult agency services and processes for transition youth.

In Example 2, 'Families start transition planning too late' the Team finds at the 5th Why that the long-standing practice of each agency connecting with students and families independent of other agencies causes confusion. Families (and others) are unable to determine how or if services work together to move students toward their adult outcomes. This disconnect in practice is a root cause the Team feels they can address and improve by focusing on ways for agencies to collaborate and coordinate as multi agency planning teams..

Example 1:

Problem Statement

Youth do not know about their own skills or about the world of work.

1st Why

Question 1: Why... don't youth know about their own skills or about the world of work?

Answer: It's part of the information we gather for the transition assessment process, but students don't usually get authentic work experiences.

2nd Why

Question 2: Why... don't students get authentic work experience?

Answer: It's not currently part of our high school program.

3rd Why

Question 3: Why... aren't authentic work experiences part of our high school program?

Answer: We used to have a work study program, but switched to a more academic based program. Now we are considering a career based curriculum to teach both academic and work skills. Teachers need training to do this.

Example 2:

Problem Statement

Families start transition planning too late

1st Why

Question 1: Why... do families start transition planning too late?

Answer: Because they do not understand how important it is to start well before age 17.

2nd Why

Question 2: Why... do they not understand how important it is to start well before age 17?

Answer: Because they are not aware of all the possible steps or connections they need to make well before graduation.

3rd Why

Question 3: Why... are they not aware of all the possible steps or connections they need to make well before graduation?

Answer: Because families are confused when each agency approaches them separately.

4th Why

Question 4: Why... are families are confused when each agency approaches them separately?

Answer: Each agency explains only their services, in isolation from any other services the youth is receiving. Families are not able to see how each agency's services connect with other services to benefit their son / daughter or what the real plan is moving forward.

5th Why

Question 5: Why... does each agency explain only their services?

Answer: There is a long standing practice of agencies working in silos, instead of collaborating and coordinating to plan with each other and individual families / youths.