



Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center

enhancing  
effectiveness of  
**APS** programs

# How Data and Quality Assurance Can Enhance the Effectiveness of APS Programs

November 18, 2020  
Part I

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# Disclaimer

The National Adult Maltreatment Reporting System (NAMRS) and the Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center (APS TARC) are a project of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, administered by the WRMA, Inc.

Contractor's findings, conclusions, and points of view do not necessarily represent U.S. Administration for Community Living, Administration on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services official policy.

# Workshop Faculty

- Leslie McGee, APS TARC, Senior Research Associate/Subject Matter Expert
- Karl Urban, APS TARC, Senior Research Manager
- Rose Green, Data Specialist, Colorado APS Program
- Ben Seisdodos, Analyst, San Francisco APS Program

# ACL's Vision for Elder Justice

A comprehensive, multidisciplinary system that effectively supports older adults and adults with disabilities so they can exercise their right to live where they choose, with the people they choose, and fully participate in their communities.

# APS TARC

Adult Protective Services Technical Assistance Resource Center

**Vision: Support APS programs in improving the safety and well-being of adult victims of maltreatment**

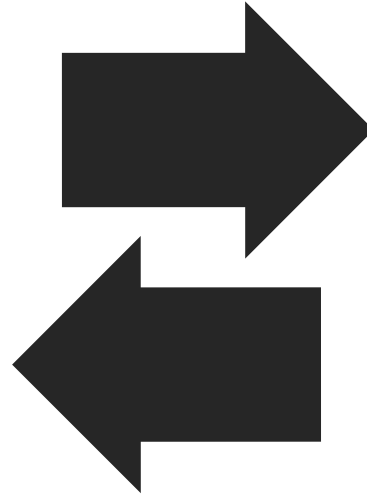
**Mission: The APS TARC will enhance the effectiveness of APS Programs**

**Goal: The APS TARC will build the capacity of APS programs by increasing the use of best/promising/informed practices**

# APS TARC: A Resource for Enhancing APS Program Effectiveness Through Research and Evaluation

Use data, evaluation, and research to:

- Determine service innovations
- Implement best practices



Have resources and processes to systemically:

- Meet the needs of state and local APS programs
- Move the APS system forward

# Workshop Overview

## Objectives

- Review the importance of data and quality assurance in improving APS programs.
- Understand how data can be used to manage APS programs and learn best practices in the use of data.
- Understand how quality assurance activities can be used to improve APS programs and learn best practices in quality assurance.

## Outline

### Part 1

- What is QA
- The APS QA Hierarchy
- The Benefits of QA
- Panel response

### Part 2

- The role of data in QA
- Panel response
- Audience response

# 1<sup>st</sup> Panelist Question

Briefly describe your program: state vs county, # of cases, # of workers, etc.



# Overview of APS QA

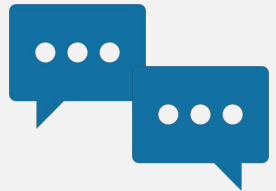
# Poll Question

Which of the following represents your program's management philosophy?

- “Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted”.
- “What gets measured gets managed.”


# Chat Question: How do you know well your program is doing?

What type of information do you use to assess how well individual employees are doing? Or how well the program is doing?



Put your answer in the chat box.

# How do you know how well you are doing?



- Types of evidence/information: qualitative and quantitative (data)
- We base our judgements on individual examples and vivid anecdotes not data/reason.
- Anecdotal, subjective, qualitative evidence has its strengths, but it has limitations as well:
  - Small sample size
  - Not necessarily focused on what is important
  - Subject to bias – either individual or system

# Why Data Is Necessary for QA

## Because....

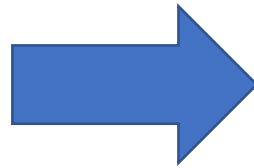
- You can't read that many cases
- Supervisor's individual assessment is subject to bias
- You have to measure what you want to improve to:
  - incentivize changed behavior and
  - know if you actually improved it

## To....

- Assess the system not the pieces
- Determine the right questions
- Target areas for focused review
- Complement case review information to get complete picture

# What is Quality Assurance?

A widely-accepted management function that is intended to ensure that services provided to consumers meet agreed upon standards. Standards come from professional organizations, evidence-based practices, and public policies that specify outcomes for consumers



- It is a **management function**: QA requires oversight, direction, and use by management to be effective.
- It is **consumer focused**: ultimately, the purpose is to improve the quality and outcomes of services.
- It is focused on **defined expectations for performance**: expectations should be derived from program policy.

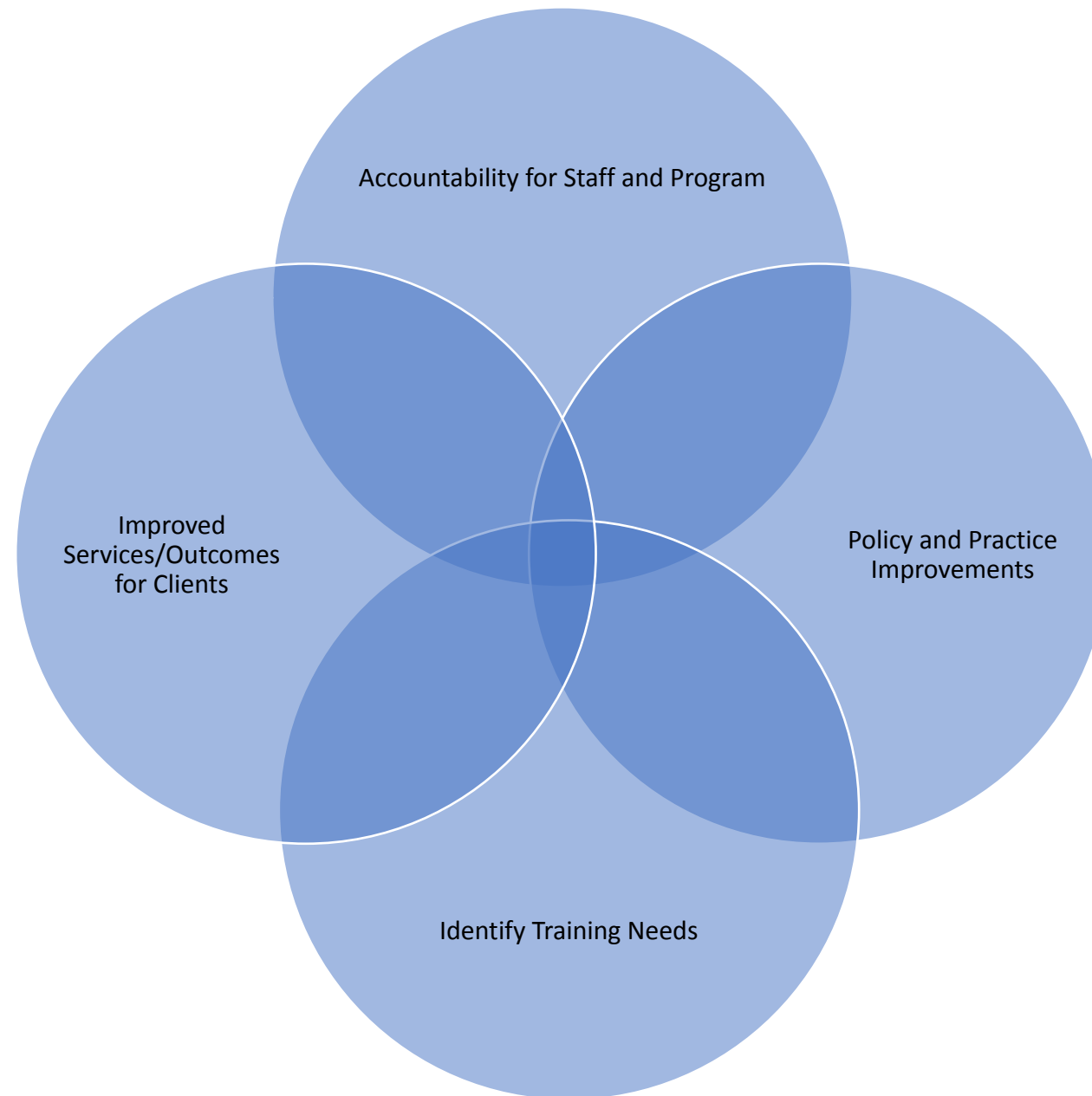
# Poll Question: APS Quality Assurance

Given this definition, does your APS have a quality assurance program?

- Yes
- No

Use the chat box to briefly list the elements of your QA program.

# Benefits of QA





# Accountability

## Staff Accountability

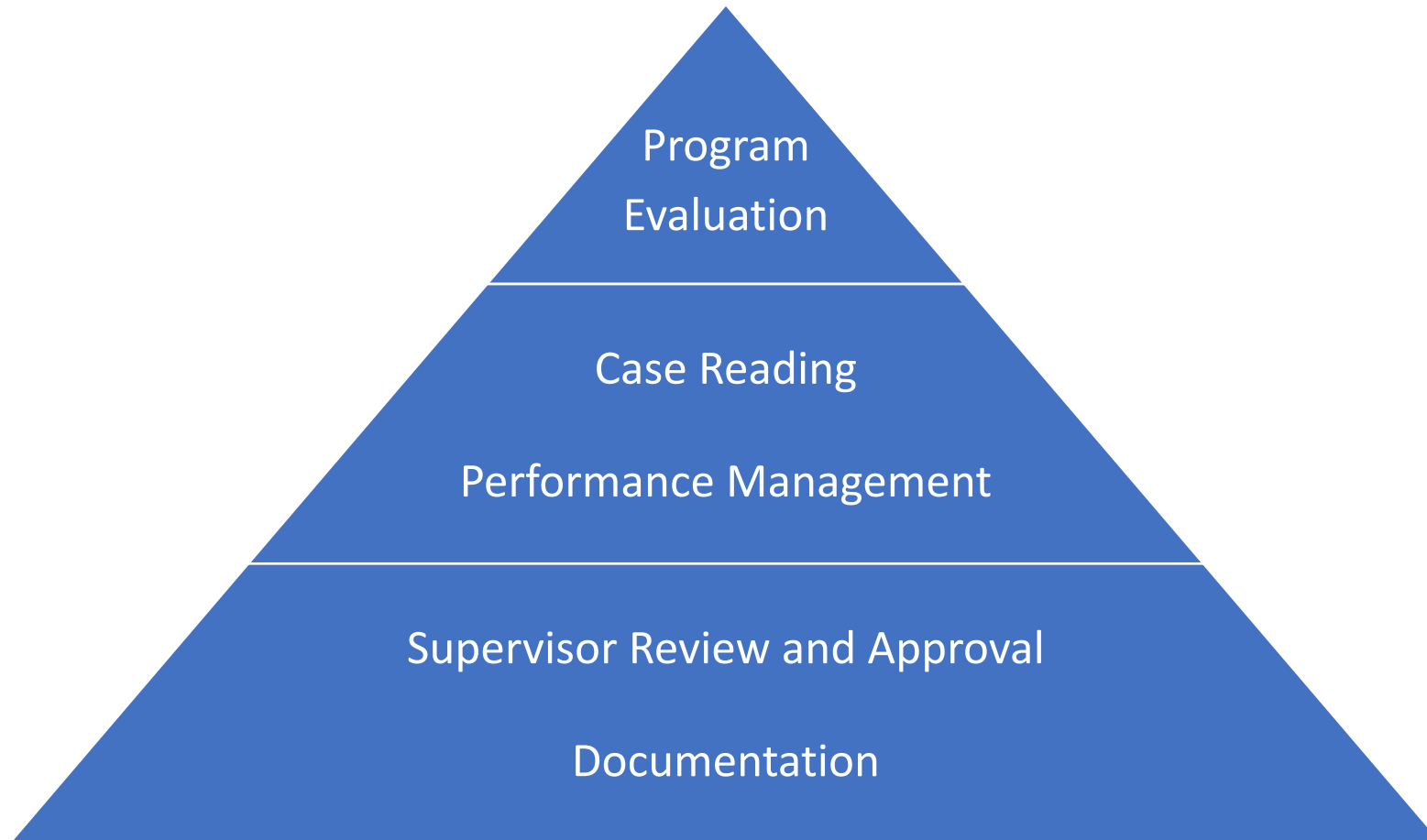
- Who are low and high performing staff?
- What are the policy and practice areas they are struggling with?

## Program Accountability

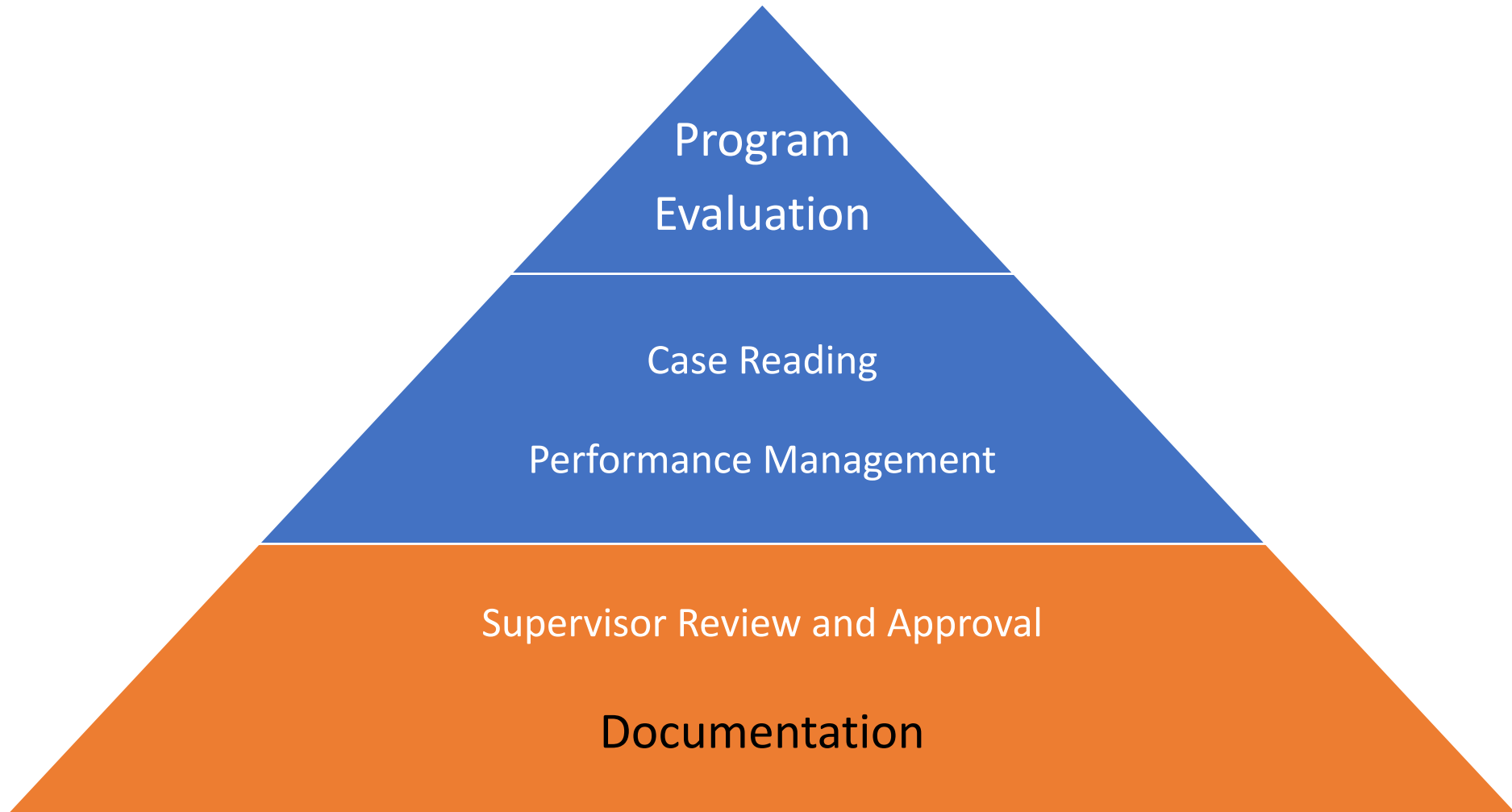
- Who are the low and high performing units and regions?
- What are the policy and practices the program is struggling with?

The data generated by QA probably will not provide the definitive answer to how well individual staff or the program is doing but it will guide supervisors and program management to the right questions to help determine how to improve staff and program performance.

# The Hierarchy of APS QA Needs



# APS QA: The Hierarchy of QA Needs



# Base Level APS QA: Documentation

- QA is impossible without good case documentation: all the other approaches depend on documentation
- It is the proverbial necessary but not sufficient condition for a good QA program.
- Most QA processes examine the quality of case documentation.

The *APS Guidelines* recognize the importance of documentation in several guidelines.

40 states require case documentation

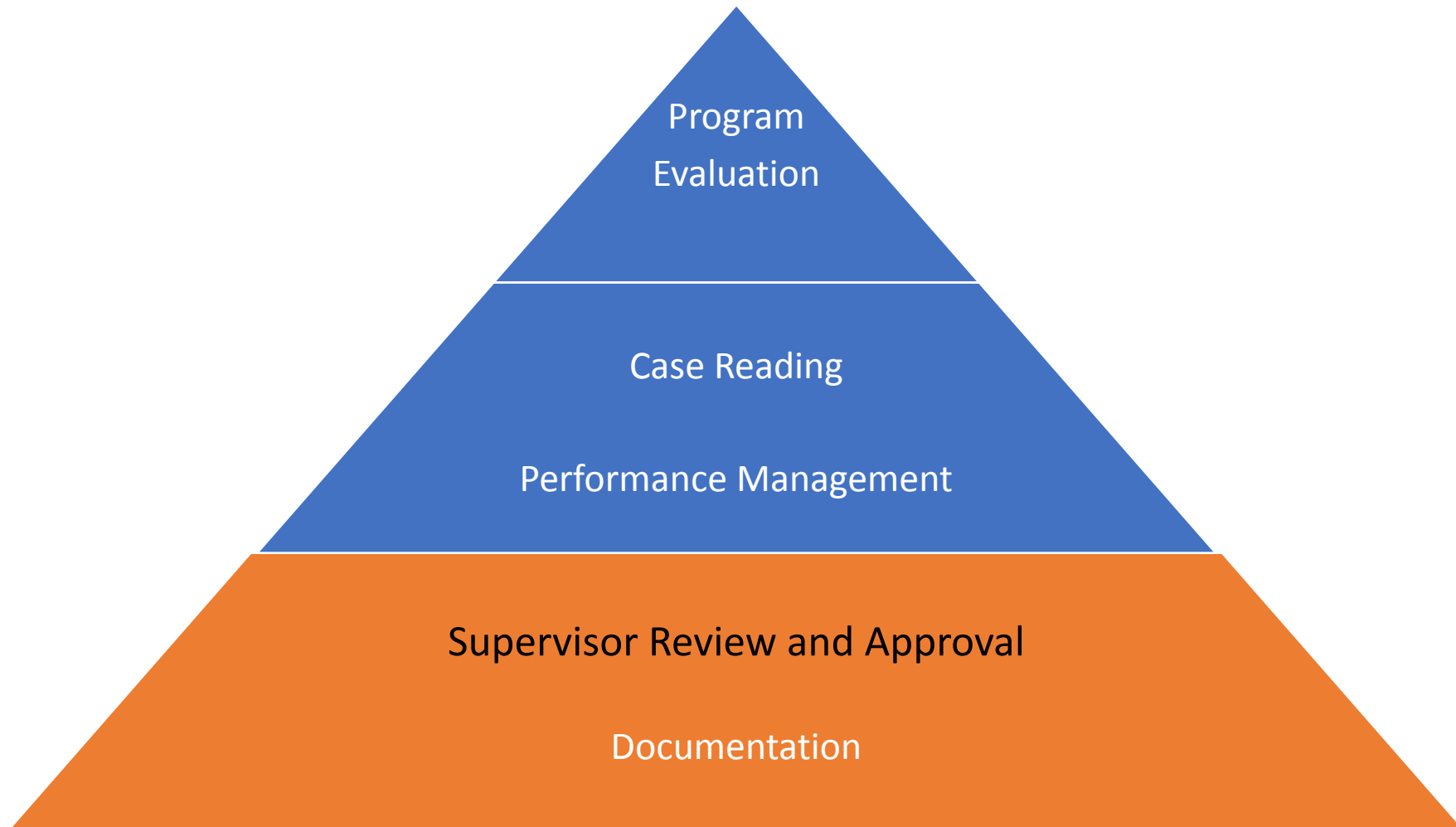
# Poll Question and Chat Description

Do you currently require documentation of cases?

- Yes
- No

Use the chat box to briefly describe your documentation requirements.

# The Hierarchy of APS QA Needs



# APS Base Level QA: Supervisory Review and Approval

- An informal process or a sign-off on cases by supervisors stating that the case meets standards.
  - **Outcome review:** ensuring that cases are not closed until the client's needs are met to the greatest extent possible.
  - **Process review:** ensure practice requirements are met
- To maximize the use of supervisor review as QA, the information learned must be synthesized and translated into constructive feedback for caseworkers.
  - The more structured the review, the more likely the information gleaned can be used in a QA process.

The *APS Guidelines*: “There should be a limit on the number of APS workers assigned to each supervisor in order to ensure consistency in casework, quality assurance, and sufficient worker support.” Research by the APS TARC found that many

20 programs require supervisor review of cases at critical junctures and 28 require supervisor review and approval of a case before it is closed.

# Poll Question and Chat Description

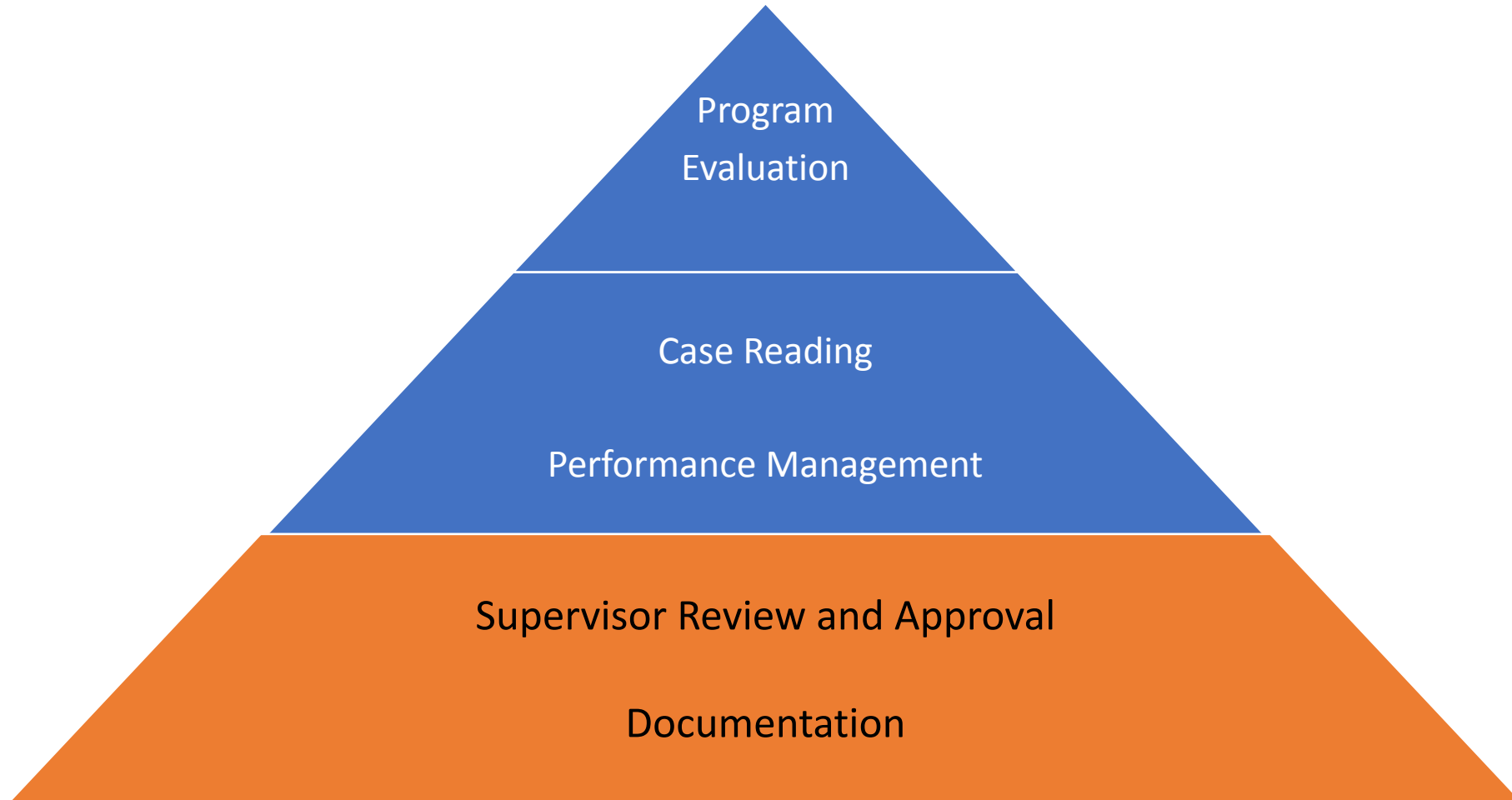
Do you currently require supervisor review and approval of cases to inform your QA process?

- Yes, but the data is not measured
- Yes, and the data is measured
- No

Use the chat box to briefly describe your supervisor review requirements.



# Panelist Discussion and Chat Response



# The Hierarchy of APS QA Needs



# Review Level: Case Review/Reading

## Peer Review

- Review of cases by peers
- Open or closed
- Informal or formal
- Structured or unstructured

Targets soft skill development

## Independent Case Review

- Independent case reviewers
- Usually closed
- Usually formal
- Usually structured

Creates formalized feedback loop

The APS Guidelines don't address case review and there is no data available on use of case reading.

# Peer Review

## What and How

- Review of cases by peers
  - Review team may vary but includes supervisors and other caseworkers
  - Key is use of staff with similar experience
- Open or closed cases
- Informal or formal
- Structured or unstructured

## Benefit/Why

- Primary focus is skills development by staff
  - Policy reminders
  - Practice soft skills
- As much value in the process as in the product
- Team building

# Independent Case Review

## What and How

- Requires resources to hire independent cases readers
- Establish
  - criteria for reviewing cases
  - system for documenting/measuring results
  - system using the results of the case reviews

## Key principles

- Establish Buy-in
- Ensure credibility of reviews
- Create structure
- Make results useful

Go to the Texas QA workshop

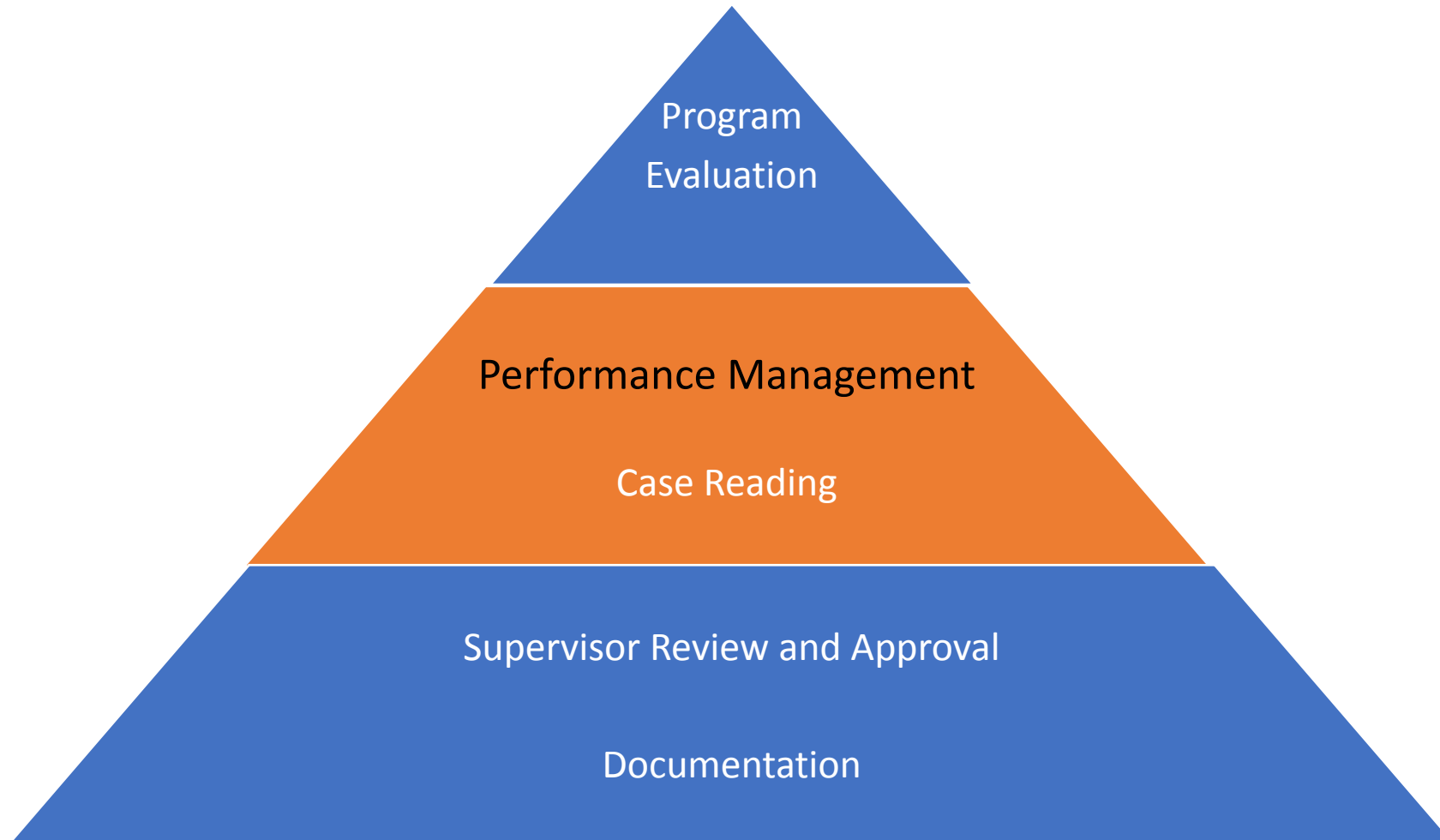
# Poll and Chat Questions

Do you currently use case reading to inform your QA process?

- Yes, peer review
- Yes, independent case readers
- Yes, both
- No

Use the chat box to briefly describe your case reading process.

# The Hierarchy of APS QA Needs



# Performance Management Definitions

## Data

Information that has been translated into a form that supports efficient movement or processing

## Performance Data

Information to make management decisions about changing current systems

## Performance Measurement

The periodic monitoring and reporting of program accomplishments, particularly progress towards pre-established goals by measuring activities (process), products (outputs), and results (outcomes)



# Performance Management

Data allow  
us to


- identify what matters
- focus on performance and results
- determine and justify the need for appropriate resources to achieve results

Data help us  
know


- **who** [worker/unit] is successful
- **what** [practice] works
- **where** [county] we are successful
- **when** we are successful

# Three Purposes for Using Data

**Accountability** – Is performance at all program levels meeting defined (or undefined) expectations?

A light blue downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the Accountability box to the Practice improvement box.

**Practice improvement** – Is the quality of individual aspects of casework meeting defined (or undefined) expectations?

A light blue downward-pointing arrow indicating a flow from the Practice improvement box to the Program improvement box.

**Program improvement** – How can management improve performance based on systemic analysis of performance?

# Performance Management: What to Measure

Determine if performance is meeting defined (or undefined) expectations by...

**1. Measuring  
casework  
practice**

and

**2. Measuring  
staff performance**

# Poll Question and Chat Discussion

Do you currently use performance management to inform your quality assurance processes?

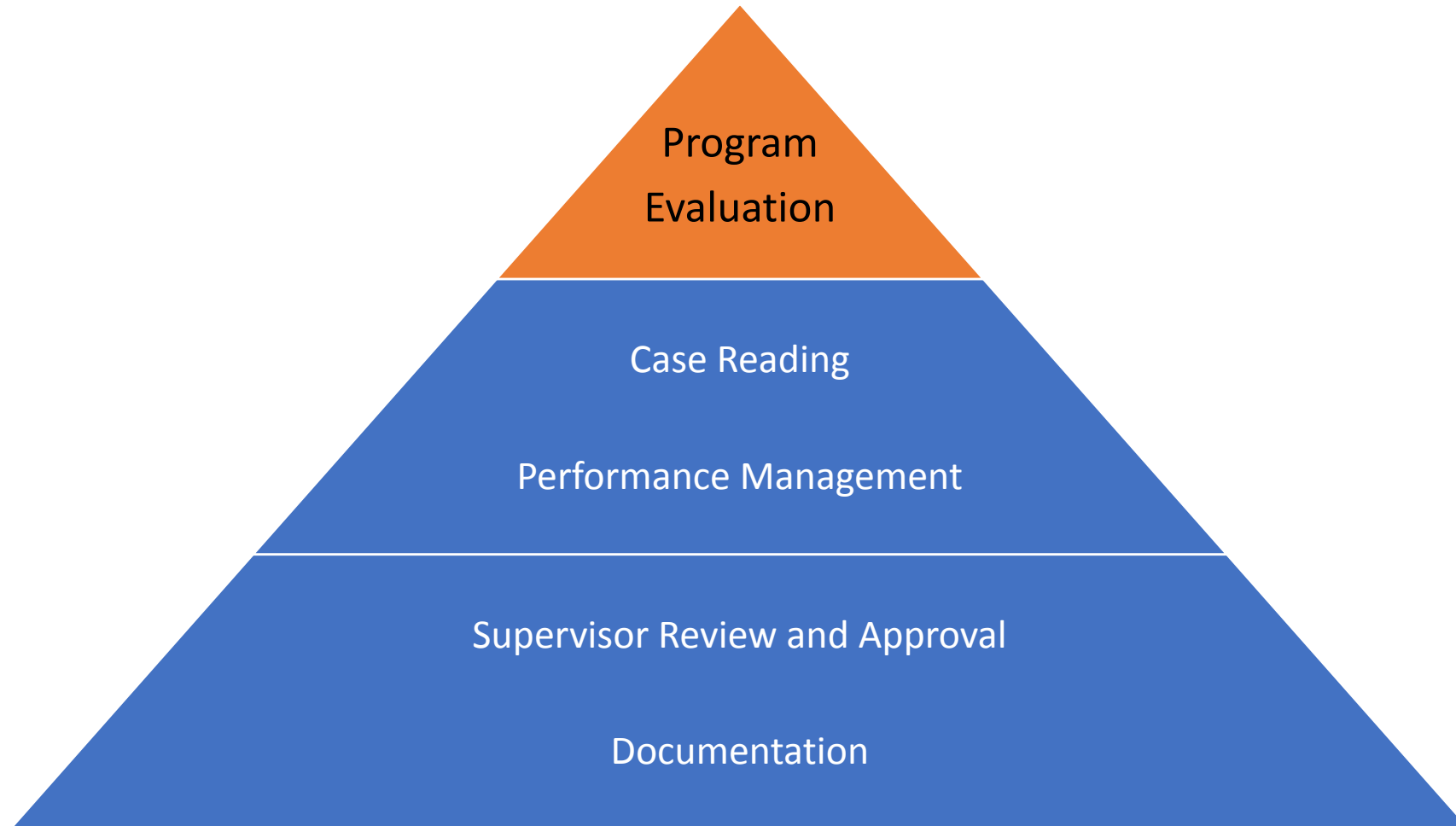
- Yes
- No

Use the chat box to describe how performance management informs your quality assurance process.

# Panelist Discussion and Chat Response



# APS QA: The Hierarchy of QA Needs



# Program Evaluation

Inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program

Program evaluation answers three questions:

1. What? What happens in programs?
2. So what? So what do the findings mean?
3. Now what? What recommendations flow from the findings?

*APS Guidelines* recommend annual reports on program performance and make the report available to stakeholders

Generally, a program evaluation is conducted by a research/evaluation shop within an agency or by a legislative or executive oversight entity.

APS Logic Model is available as a resource to help frame your evaluation

# Poll and Chat Question

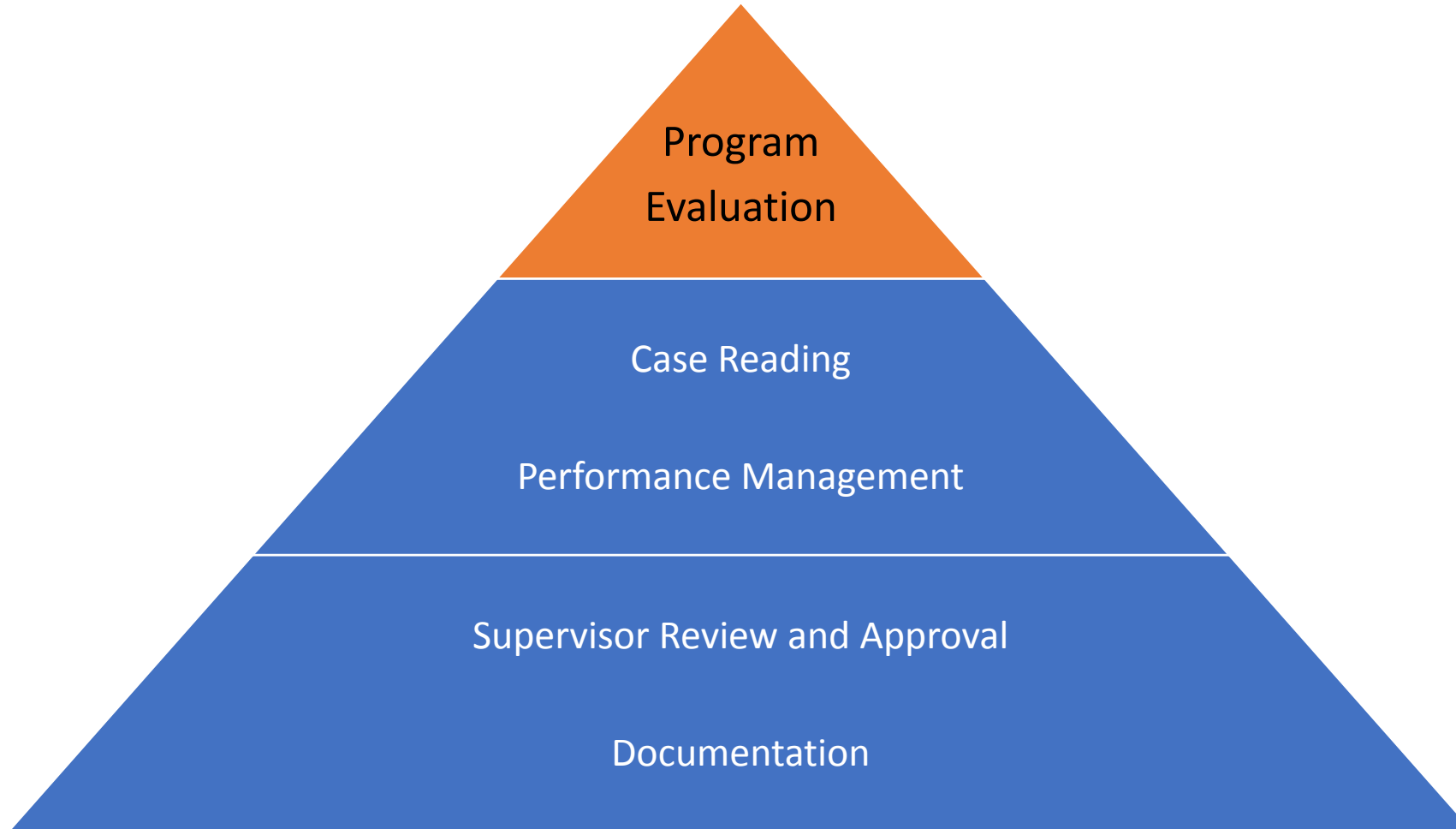
Do you currently use program evaluation to inform your QA process?

- Yes
- No

Use the chat box to briefly describe how you use program evaluation.



# Panelist Discussion and Chat Response



QA Approach	Purpose and Benefit	Considerations
Documentation	Provide essential information for all other approaches	Should be monitored as part of the QA process.
Supervisor Review	Ensure individual case quality for worker accountability and improve services for clients	Should be documented in system to identify patterns
Performance Management	Assess case quality across multiple cases to ensure worker accountability and identify areas of improvement in policy/practice and training	Requires system to capture, report, and use data.
Case Reading	Assess case quality across multiple cases to ensure worker accountability, identify systemic areas of improvement in policy/practice and training, and provide “soft” feedback to caseworkers on opportunities for personal improvement	Should review all workers but can target as needed. Can focus on special issues.
Program Evaluation	Assess case quality in program areas targeted for improvement through mixed methods research to identify needed improvement in policy/practice, training, and services for clients.	Use multiple and mixed methods (e.g., performance data, focus groups)

# Your Turn: What Questions Do You Have for Us on Part 1?

Raise your hand if you want to ask verbally or type your question in the chat box



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### Part 1

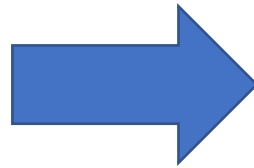
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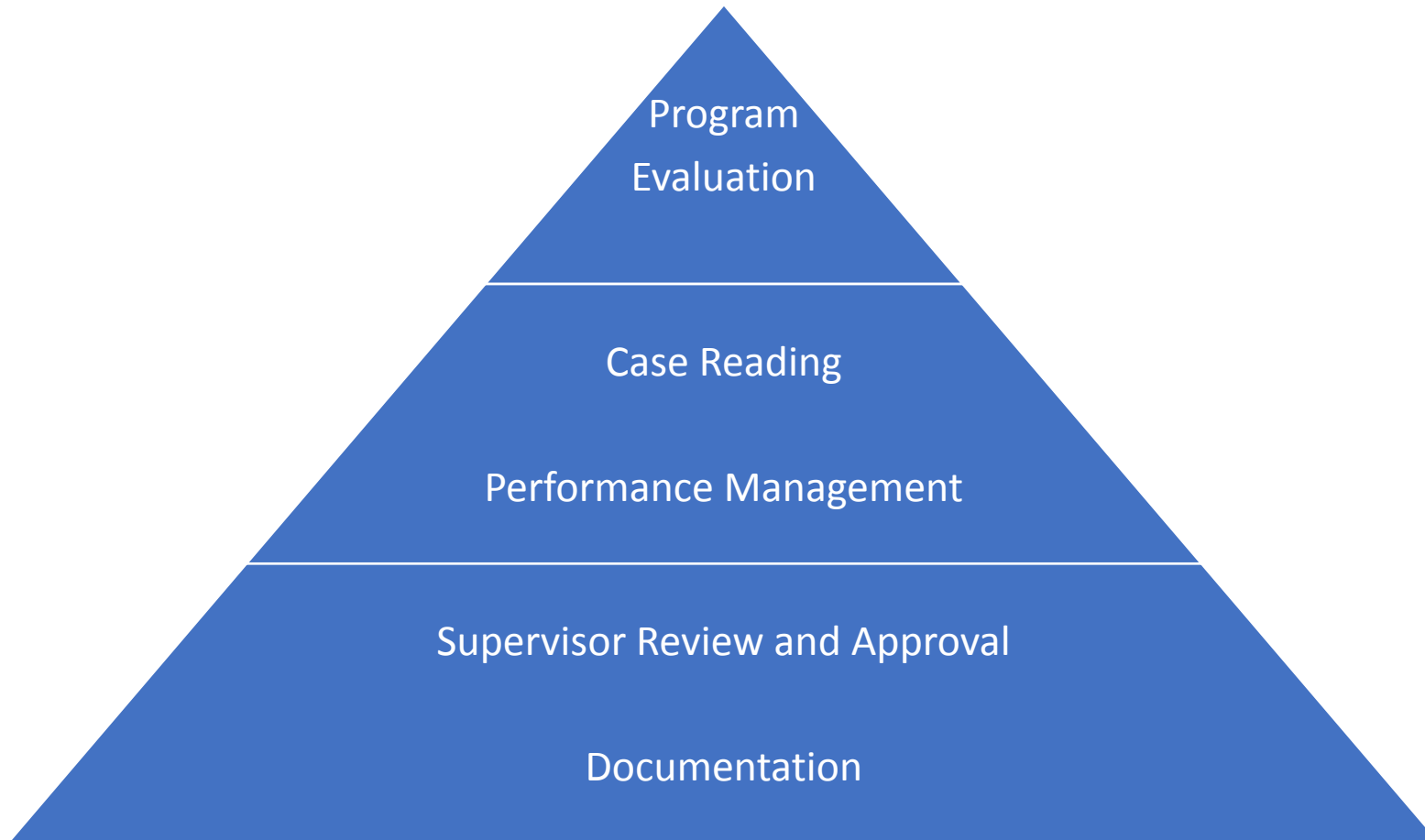
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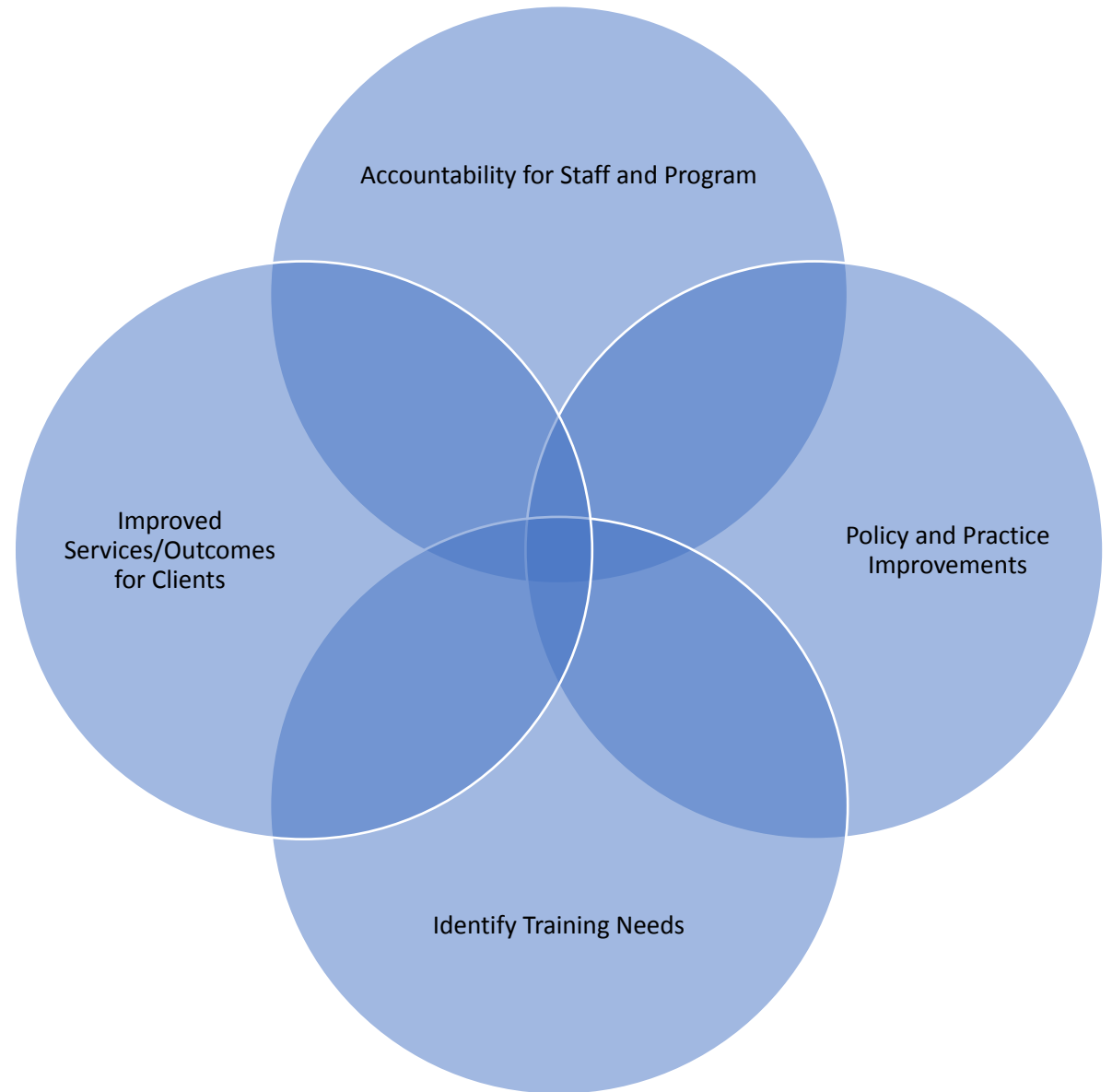
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# The Hierarchy of APS QA Needs





# Benefits of QA



# Why Data Is Necessary for QA

## Because....

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- Supervisor's individual assessment is subject to bias
- You have to measure what you want to improve to incentivize changed behavior and to know if you actually improved it

## To....

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- Determine the right questions
- Target areas for focused review
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QA Approach	Data Use Considerations
Documentation	No documentation, no data
Supervisor Review	Generally not structured in a way to capture data. Nevada and MA DPPC use a structured approach focused on key criteria that captures data.
Case Reading	Peer review case review is not data focused but “soft” feedback focused Independent case review should produce data for program improvement by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining key program standards</li> <li>• Measuring compliance with those standards by scoring cases of as representative a sample as possible at whatever unit of analysis (from worker to program as a whole) you choose</li> <li>• Providing feedback into program improvement processes (employee evaluation, program evaluation, policy and training updates)</li> </ul>
Performance Management	Based on collection of casework data on a systemic basis. Requires case management system that collects more than case note information. Have to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are key policy and practice areas that we want to measure and can we measure them?</li> <li>• What are key client outcome that we want to measure and can we measure them?</li> <li>• Who has access to and uses the data? What is the feedback loop for program improvement?</li> </ul>
Program Evaluation	Relies on data gathered from any source Often will collect additional data May conduct more sophisticated statistical analysis of data

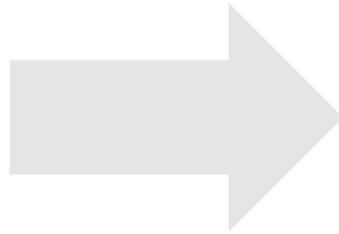
# Panelist Discussion Time

1. Describe how you use data in your QA program
2. Provide an actual example how data was used to improve your program
3. What one thing do you think is the key to successful use of data in a QA program?

# Your Turn: What Questions Do You Have for Us?

Raise your hand if you want to ask verbally or type your question in the chat box

# Successful Use of Data Requires Users



- 1 Quality data
- 2 System for collecting, using, and validating the data
- 3 Access to the data
- 4 Integrity of the data

# What are the limitations in use of APS data?

**Difficulty  
measuring  
outcomes**

Nebulous  
change  
attribution

Expensive to  
collect

**Data must be  
accurate and  
reliable**

Is documentation  
accurate?

Is sample  
size  
sufficient?

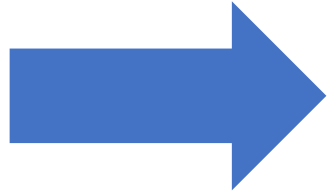
**Don't misuse  
the data**

"All management  
cares about is the  
numbers"

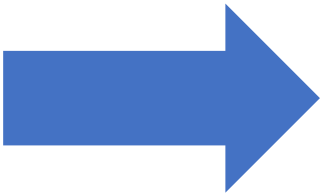
Perceived as  
punitive, not  
constructive

It's easy to miss  
the forest because  
of the trees

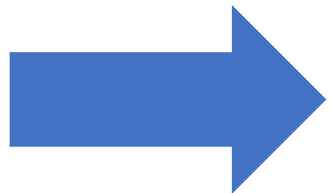
# The pros and cons of managing by data



Data is a means, not the ends, to improving outcomes for clients



Data helps you to ask the right questions, but rarely provides definitive answers on how to improve performance



The rewards are worth the effort, but pay attention to potential unintended consequences



# APS TARC Workshops for Improving Program Effectiveness

- Using System's Thinking to Improve Your APS Program
- Using Data to Improve Your APS Program
- Use QA to Improve Your APS Program
- See other Toolkits for other potential workshop ideas



# Contact Us

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kurban@wrma.com