

Flowchart

What is a Flowchart?

A flowchart identifies the actual flow of events in a process, in comparison to the prescribed or ideal flow of events. A flowchart can show where complexity or redundancy occurs, allow a team to agree on process steps, and compare an actual process with the ideal process. It can show where additional data should be collected, and serve as a training aid.

How to Construct a Flowchart

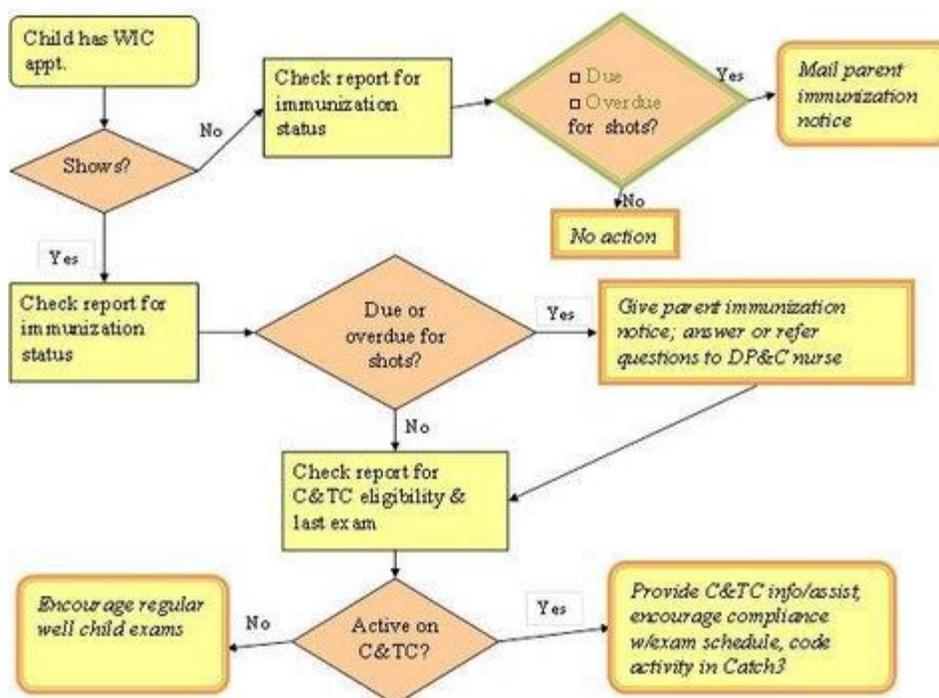
1. Clearly define the starting point—where the process begins—and the ending point
2. Determine the steps in the process, and place them in sequence as they currently stand
3. Walk through the flowchart with your team to theoretically test the flowchart's accuracy

Interpretation

- Analyze the flow of events relative to standard practice or the ideal flow
- Look for duplication of effort or unnecessary wait time
- Consider the complexity of the process and how it could be simplified
- Determine whether there is variation in how different people follow the process

Example Flow Chart

Countryside Community Health Board: Checking Immunization Status



3. Group Ideas

Start grouping the ideas, without talking. (Grouping silently allows team members to avoid influencing each other's decisions, or voicing judgments about ideas.)

When grouping, think about similarities and connections. Some ideas might not fit into a group, which is just fine—sometimes, these “loner” ideas can just be as important as other ideas without fitting into a group.

4. Categorize and Get Consensus

Start talking with each other: Do you notice interesting patterns? Things that should be changed/rearranged?

Place headings at the top of each like grouping of ideas. It's not unusual to come up with 4-5 main ideas, under which ideas are grouped. If you need to, you can divide big group headings into smaller subheadings for clarity, or place two headings next to each other, under a 'superheading.'

5. Finalize

Using an appropriate software (like Microsoft Visio or Bubbl.us) or drawing by hand, finalize your diagram and distribute it to team members as appropriate. Make sure your problem statement is included at the top of your finalized diagram, and that headings and subheadings are evident and reflect the group's consensus.