

AMPLIFY YOUR STORY: Conducting a Root Cause Analysis

Purpose: We get so wrapped up in our programs and getting through all our work that we rarely get to take a step back and really reflect on, a) the impacts we are having, and, b) our approaches to the changes we want to see in our communities. Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a method for systematically uncovering root causes behind the issues that the communities we serve are facing. This analysis helps us make programmatic decisions, apply for funding, and evaluate programs based on root causes—not just the symptoms.

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Treating Causes Along with Symptoms



What is Root Cause Analysis (RCA)?

RCA is a method you can use to discover the reasons, or the **root causes**, behind an issue that you are seeing in the communities you serve.

Why Use RCA?

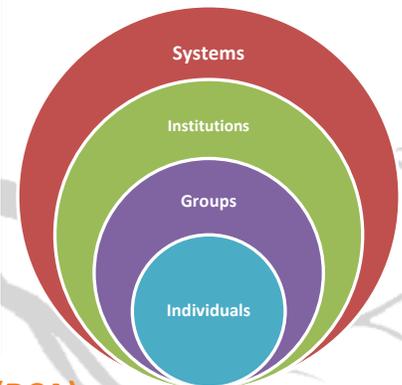
When you use RCA, you and your community “own the issue” that you are facing, and this will help you select appropriate responses (program changes, advocacy, etc.).

Systematic Analysis → Systematic Change

We know the issues facing our communities are not just because of **individual** struggles. There are **underlying social issues**, including barriers and inequities based in race, social class, immigration status, gender, sexuality, ability and more, that lead to unequal lived realities. To make real, sustainable social change, we need to strategize at all levels—with individuals, families and communities, and also at the level of **systems**—policies, opportunities, access, and more.

When is RCA Most Applicable?

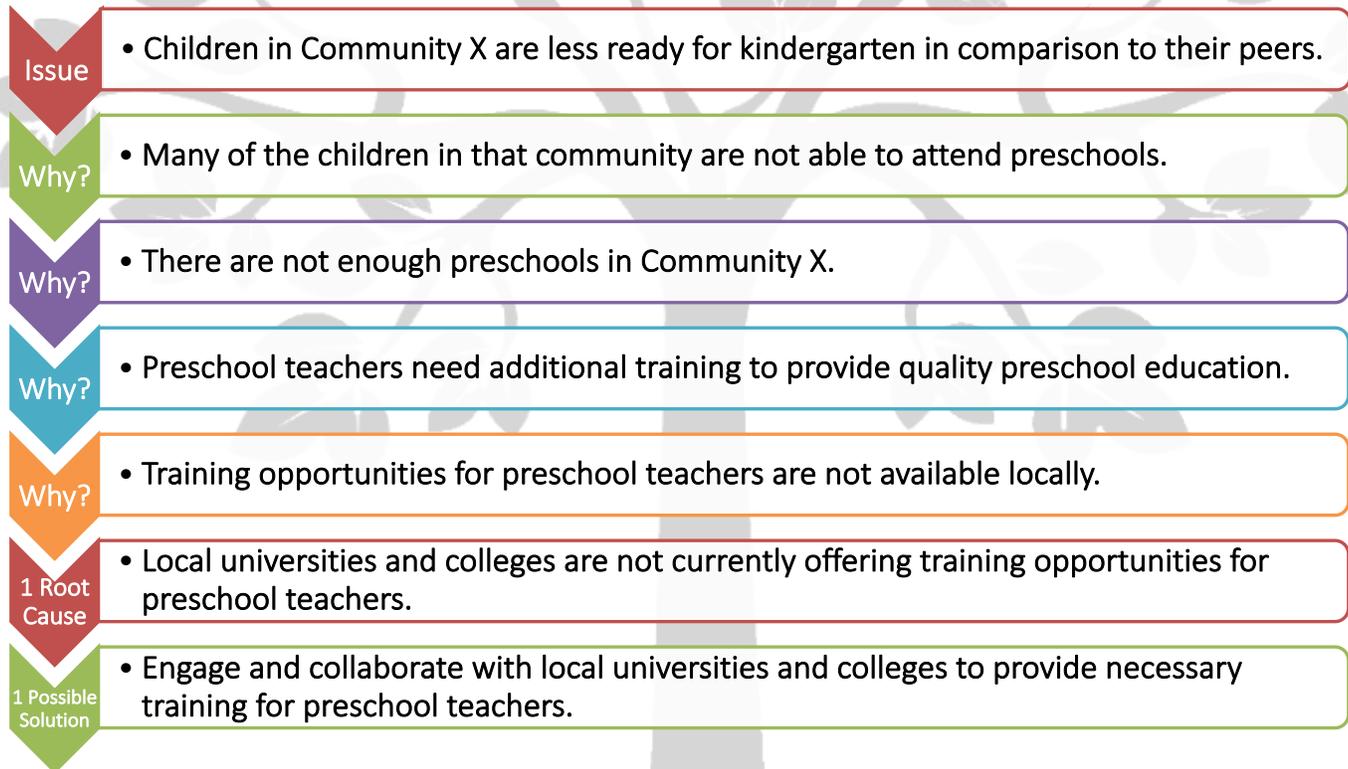
- To find out which **individual factors** can provide targets of change for your organization’s cause. *For example, levels of knowledge: “Do pregnant women of color need to know more about their rights?”; awareness, attitudes, behaviors.*
- To explore **social causes**. *Example: Why do certain communities have higher rates of children who are not ready for kindergarten? You can break up causes into subgroups, like cultural, economic, and political factors).*
- To uncover **multiple solutions** for a specific issue and allow your organization to see alternatives that you might not have seen or considered before. *This can help increase the possibility of choosing the most appropriate solution(s).*



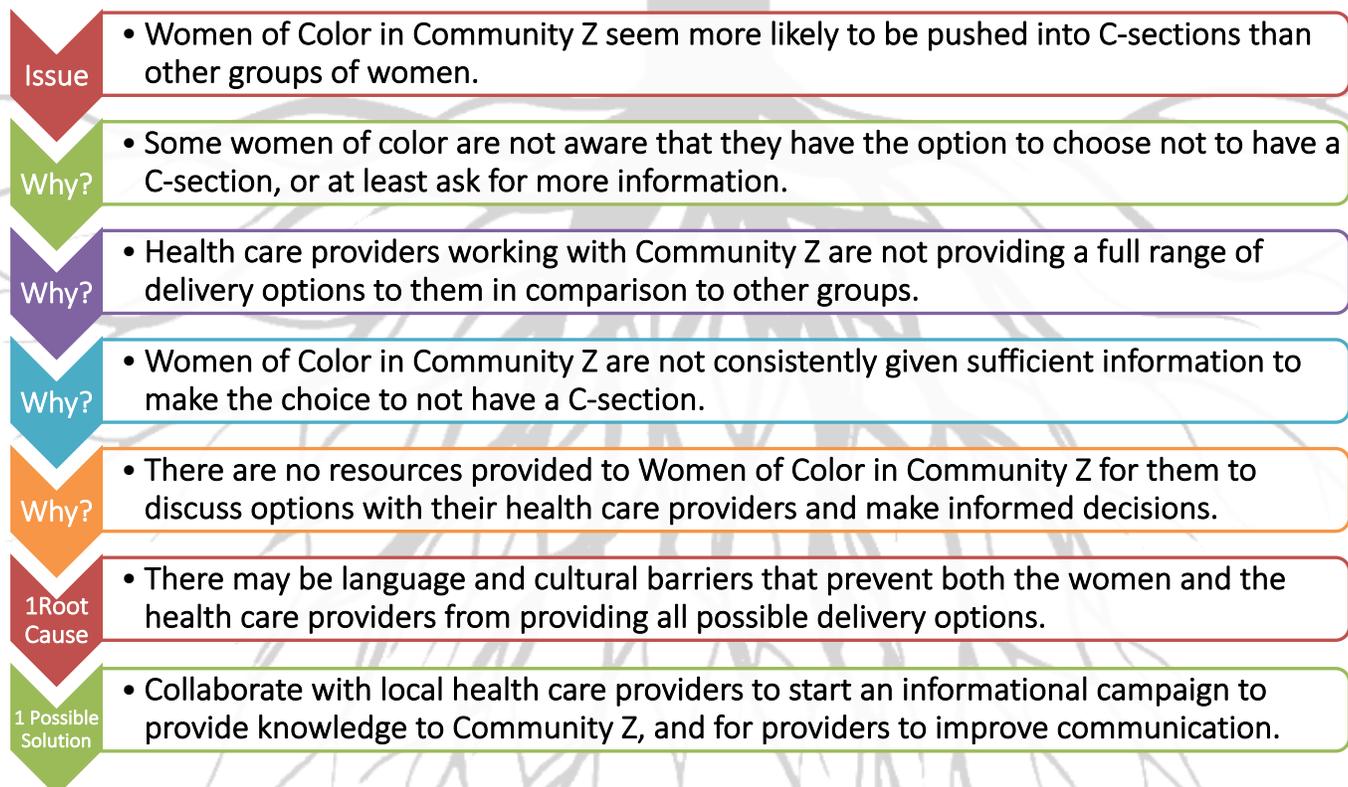
How to Conduct a Root Cause Analysis (RCA)

 <h4>Establish a Team</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite people to brainstorm possible causes who are both affected by the issue AND who are in a position to contribute to the potential solution(s) ▪ The more representative the team is, the more likely it is for the root causes to be uncovered 	 <h4>Apply “5 Whys” Techniques</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start with the problem statement, or a statement of the issue the community is facing ▪ Follow by asking five (or more) “whys” ▪ Find what the root cause(s) of the issue is/are 	 <h4>Recommend and Implement Solutions</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your working group may end up generating more than one cause ▪ You can either <u>prioritize one solution</u> to implement <u>OR consider multiple solutions</u> <p>See the Qualitative Data Analysis and Using Public Data emPower Tools to gather data to support your conclusions and solutions</p>
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RCA Example 1: Kindergarten Readiness



RCA Example 2: C-Section Rates for Women of Color



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