Quality Improvement Tools
The 5 Whys

The key to solving a problem is to first truly understand it. Often, we try to solve a problem before completely comprehending its cause, and the focus shifts too quickly from the problem to the solution. What we think is the cause, however, is sometimes just another symptom.

One way to identify the root cause of a problem is to ask "Why?" five times. When a problem presents itself, ask "Why did this happen?" Then, don't stop at the answer to this first question. Ask "Why?" again and again until you reach the root cause. This exercise can be surprisingly insightful in helping you figure out what is really going on, and can help you avoid "quick fix" solutions. It is especially useful for tackling chronic problems that show up over and over again in a system.

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?