



**Quality Improvement
Organizations**

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CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES

SUPERIOR HEALTH
Quality Alliance

FOUNDATION FOR ACTION—GUIDANCE
FOR THRIVING IN HEALTH CARE TODAY

Foundation Components to Support a Safety Culture Assessment



SUPERIOR HEALTH QUALITY ALLIANCE ACTION GUIDE

Foundation Components to Support a Safety Culture Assessment

Organizations with a strong safety culture promote psychological safety and accountability to enhance the development of rapid, scalable and sustainable change internally and externally through community collaboration and partnerships.

This tool is the first in the series, **Foundation for Action—Guidance for Thriving in Health Care Today**. This assessment will help provide you with a quick evaluation of your organization's alignment with supporting a safety culture.

Superior Health Quality Alliance (Superior Health) will use three implementation strategies to support organizations in their quality improvement efforts. Included below are descriptions of each strategy.

| Independent Implementation | Affinity Group | Structured Collaborative |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement best practices independently and with Superior Health guidance. • Access to a number of resources, subject matter experts, action guides and learnings to assist in implementation of focused interventions. • Collaborate with health care professionals across the region and promote best practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improvement platform to virtually connect the health care community with community-based organizations and encourages them to work together. • Create opportunities for sharing ideas, fostering collaborative learning and problem solving by spreading best practices and identifying/addressing barriers in given goal topics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive approach to assisting and supporting implementation of proven interventions. • Real-time collaborative sessions focused on sharing, tracking and monitoring improvements. |

HOW TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

Use this assessment to understand where your organization stands with respect to having foundational components in place to support a safety culture.

- The assessment is designed for everyone to take and it is recommended leadership take the assessment in the same timeframe as other staff.
- Consider having all members of your leadership team and your initiative team complete the checklist and discuss the responses.
- As a team, identify areas of focus and prioritize the assessment results.
- For each identified area of focus, review the corresponding list of resources to identify how to proceed with making a change.
- As you continue implementing integration into your system, use this document to assess your progress and identify other areas of improvement.

Cambridge dictionary defines **organizational culture as the types of attitudes and agreed ways of working shared by the employees of a company or an organization.**

Why is an organization's culture important? Culture has a direct effect on an organization's commitment to a safe workplace.

Creating a foundation to promote psychological safety and accountability is achieved by these core components:

1. Leadership
2. Patient, Resident and Family Engagement
3. Committed Staff, Teamwork and Communication
4. Continuous Learning and Improvement

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: LEADERSHIP

Leadership is responsible to find ways to demonstrate and foster commitments to ensure the safety and well-being of the health care workforce, patients, families and care partners. Leaders are not limited to the leadership at the top of the organization—they are the key role models and sponsors who support successful and functional teams. Ensure these strategies are shared with all staff; leaders may emerge among teams and should be encouraged.

The following leadership strategies allow an organization to identify strengths and opportunities related to developing and sustaining a culture of safety.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION...

- ☐ Define and establish a vision for safe care, such as:
 - Safety called out as a core value of the organization.
 - All levels of staff within the organization understand what safety means and the importance of safe care.
 - All staff know their role in the organizational efforts to enhance safety.
- ☐ Set high expectations for staff and customer service and safety-minded actions, such as:
 - Define a set of behavioral standards and accountability.
 - Clearly define the process in place to ensure behavioral expectations and accountability practices are consistent.
- ☐ Develop and support a culture of trust, transparency, open communication, respect, teamwork and inclusion, such as:
 - Trust, respect and inclusion are core values of the organization.
 - All staff feel comfortable speaking up without fear of retribution regardless of rank, role or department.
- ☐ Engage the board of directors and corporate leaders in building a culture of safety, such as:
 - Educate the board of directors and corporate leaders regarding their role in promoting an organizational culture of safety.
 - Include positions on the board for patients, family members and community members.
 - Develop opportunities to form relationships with other community partners to ensure a culture of safety within the community.
- ☐ Select and develop leaders and staff who are accountable for safety, such as:
 - Leadership development strategies include accountability for safety.
 - Design and deliver safety training for leadership and staff.

☐ Develop a just and fair culture, such as:

- Empower all workforce members, patients and families to be unafraid to speak up with safety concerns.
- Identify opportunities to engage team members in system design improvement and processes that directly affect them.
- Develop and implement strategies to balance individual and organizational accountability to improve safe systems.

Resources for Action Toward Leadership to Support a Safety Culture

| Resource | Description |
|--|---|
| <p><i>National Steering Committee for Patient Safety Implementation Resource Guide: A National Action Plan to Advance Patient Safety</i></p> <p>Boston, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2020.</p> | Provides clear direction for health care leaders and organizations to make advances toward safer care and reduce harm across the continuum of care. |
| <p><i>Leading a Culture of Safety: A Blueprint for Success</i></p> <p>American College of Healthcare Executives and Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2017.</p> | Provides organizations with clear actions to take to assess and advance their culture of safety. |
| <p><i>Reliability Culture Implementation Guide</i></p> <p>Great Lakes Partners for Patients Hospital Improvement Innovation Network and Minnesota Hospital Association.</p> | Provides resources for health care organizations, with an emphasis on safety culture. |
| <p><i>A Framework for High-Reliability Organizations in Healthcare</i></p> <p>Frankel A, Haraden C, Federico F, Lenoci-Edwards J. A Framework for Safe, Reliable, and Effective Care. White Paper. Cambridge, MA: Institute for Healthcare Improvement and Safe & Reliable Healthcare; 2017.</p> | Provides key components of high reliability organizations to enhance care delivery while focusing on learning and quality improvement. |

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: PATIENT, RESIDENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Patient, resident and family engagement relates to creating an environment, behaviors and expectations to ensure patients, residents and families are at the center of health care work. Being patient-centered requires the understanding that all processes, decisions and practices consider the impact on the patient, resident and family; while assuring that safety, quality and service are integral components and outcomes.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION...

- ☐ Involve patient/resident/family in goal setting, developing and updating care plans and daily decisions, such as:
 - Commit to fully engaging patients, residents and families in all aspects of care, at all levels.
 - Recognize patients, residents and families as full partners on the health care team.
- ☐ Promote open communication among the care team and the patient/resident/family, such as:
 - Encourage patient, resident and family participation in care conferences.
 - Ensure organizational staff have been trained in effective communication strategies that promote open communication with patients, residents and families.
- ☐ Engage patients, residents and families in organization improvement efforts, such as:
 - Collect patient, resident and family feedback to improve patient safety, quality and overall satisfaction with the care experience.
 - Identify opportunities to include the patient, resident and family in the development and implementation of improvement processes and policies that impact patient care.
- ☐ Promote a culture of trust and respect for patients, families and care partners, such as:
 - Ensure patients, residents and families are included as an integral part of the care team.
 - Ensure mechanisms are in place for patients, residents and families to report concerns.

Resources for Action Toward Patient, Resident and Family Engagement to Support a Safety Culture

| Resource | Description |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Harnessing Evidence and Experience to Change Culture: A Guiding Framework for Patient and Family Engaged Care, NAM Perspectives</i></p> <p>Discussion Paper, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC.</p> | <p>Provides a framework for engaging patients and families in care that is planned, delivered, managed and continuously improved in active partnership with patients and families.</p> |
| <p><i>Care Transitions Tools for Patients and Families</i></p> | <p>The Care Transitions Program, directed by Eric Coleman, M.D., MPH, at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, hosts a website created for patients, families and caregivers to reference during care transitions from hospital to home. It includes a discharge preparation checklist (written in plain language), as well as tips for managing care at home, how to recognize and respond to 'red flags' that may lead to an unplanned readmission and how to manage medication. The program also hosts care transitions tools for health care professionals: the <i>Family Caregiver Activation in Transitions® (FCAT®) Tool</i>, <i>Care Transitions Measure® Tools</i> and the <i>DECAF™ Family Caregiver Tool</i></p> |
| <p><i>Oral, Linguistic, and Culturally Competent Services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Healthcare</i> • <i>Diverse Communities, Common Concerns: Assessing Health Care for Minority Americans</i> | <p>Provides approaches for your organization to have culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS) to address shifting demographic trends in health care.</p> |
| <p><i>National Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)</i></p> | <p>The National CLAS Standards aim to improve health care quality and advance health equity by establishing a framework for organizations to serve the nation's increasingly diverse communities.</p> |

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: COMMITTED STAFF, TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

Respect, transparency and teamwork are key components of safety in the workplace. Organizations need to create a culture where employees feel like a member of the team, their opinions are valued, they are able to contribute and they are comfortable speaking up when they think there is an opportunity to improve work processes.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION...

- ☐ Create a highly effective and collaborative multidisciplinary team, such as:
 - Involve members of the organization who are directly impacted by the process, change or work.
 - Utilize the resources and talents of all team members.
 - Mix up the involvement on teams to allow for a broader perspective.
- ☐ Develop an infrastructure that promotes teamwork and communication, such as:
 - Create and maintain a climate of trust with honest and transparent communication.
 - Promote feedback.
 - Encourage team members to talk openly and work through misunderstandings and conflicts.
- ☐ Provide tools and resources that support teamwork, communication and monitoring, such as:
 - Ask teams to reflect on their function as a team and identify opportunities to improve collaboration.
 - Use internal communication channels to promote effective teamwork and communication.

Resources for Action Toward Committed Staff, Teamwork, and Communication to Support a Safety Culture

| Resource | Description |
|---|--|
| <i>Comprehensive Unit-Based Safety Program (CUSP) Method</i> | The Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program (CUSP) is a method that can help clinical teams make care safer by combining improved teamwork, clinical best practices and the science of safety. The Core CUSP toolkit gives clinical teams the training resources and tools to apply the CUSP method and build their capacity to address safety issues. |
| T. E.A.M. Talk: Communicating with Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Facilitator Guide</i> • <i>Participant Guide - PPT</i> • <i>TEAM Talk Cards 1 TEAM Talk Cards 2</i> | Caregivers identify their preferred communication style and improve communication with others. |
| <i>TeamSTEPPS®</i> | TeamSTEPPS is an evidence-based set of teamwork tools, aimed at optimizing patient outcomes by improving communication and teamwork skills among health care professionals. <i>Readiness Assessment</i> <i>TeamSTEPPS® Case Studies</i> |

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS: CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

When an organization commits to continuous learning and improvement, it creates and strengthens processes to promote transparency, reliability and sharing among staff.

DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION...

- ☐ Identify staff learning needs to provide safe care, such as:
 - Develop core competencies and skills needed for specific job roles.
 - Develop competency trainings and annual skills assessments.
 - Create learning feedback loops to assess impact of the education.
- ☐ Provide orientation and opportunities for ongoing education to support learning, such as:
 - Offer a variety of learning methods to provide education.
 - Establish education expectations for continuous learning.
 - Assess the organization's education and training programs annually.
- ☐ Develop sustainability plans for project initiatives. Sustainability means that the process continues to work over extended periods of time as it was initially intended. By creating a sustainability plan, an organization is able to maintain the benefits of a program. The following should be included in a sustainability plan:
 - A process to evaluate effectiveness of education, including pre/post-test measurements and training evaluations.
 - Set organizational goals using national, regional and/or state benchmark data.
 - Identify and track measures to understand organizational performance; most often, these will align with an organization's strategic goals.
 - Identify and prioritize areas to improve.
 - Determine a standardized implementation process, ensure the key components are included within the spread of the intervention and create a process for monitoring over time.

Resources for Action Toward Continuous Learning and Improvement to Support a Safety Culture

| Resource | Description |
|---|--|
| <i>Sustainability Planning Worksheet – Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)</i> (Follow the link to easily create a free login to access the document.) | This worksheet is used for long-term stability planning of improvement efforts. |
| <i>Sustaining Improvement White Paper</i> (Follow the link to easily create a free login to access the document.) Scoville R, Little K, Rakover J, Luther K, Mate K. Sustaining Improvement. IHI White Paper. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2016. (Available at ihi.org) | This white paper provides a framework for health care organizations to sustain improvements in safety, effectiveness and efficiency in patient care. |
| <i>Building a Successful Coalition: A Toolkit of Resources</i> | This toolkit is intended to aid coalition work from inception through sustainment. |

This assessment was developed from the following resources:

- [All Cause Harm Prevention in Nursing Homes safety culture component.](#)
- National Steering Committee for Patient Safety. [Implementation Resource Guide: A National Action Plan to Advance Patient Safety.](#) Boston, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement; 2020.

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