

11 Tenets of a Safety Culture

Definition of Safety Culture

Safety culture is the sum of what an organization is and does in the pursuit of safety. The Patient Safety Systems (PS) chapter of The Joint Commission accreditation manuals defines safety culture as the product of individual and group beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies, and patterns of behavior that determine the organization's commitment to quality and patient safety.

1 Apply a transparent, nonpunitive approach to reporting and learning from adverse events, close calls and unsafe conditions.



2 Use clear, just, and transparent risk-based processes for recognizing and distinguishing human errors and system errors from unsafe, blameworthy actions.



3 CEOs and all leaders adopt and model appropriate behaviors and champion efforts to eradicate intimidating behaviors.



4 Policies support safety culture and the reporting of adverse events, close calls and unsafe conditions. These policies are enforced and communicated to all team members.

5 Recognize care team members who report adverse events and close calls, who identify unsafe conditions, or who have good suggestions for safety improvements. Share these “free lessons” with all team members (i.e., feedback loop).



6 Determine an organizational baseline measure on safety culture performance using a validated tool.



7 Analyze safety culture survey results from across the organization to find opportunities for quality and safety improvement.



8 Use information from safety assessments and/or surveys to develop and implement unit-based quality and safety improvement initiatives designed to improve the culture of safety.



9 Embed safety culture team training into quality improvement projects and organizational processes to strengthen safety systems.

10 Proactively assess system strengths and vulnerabilities, and prioritize them for enhancement or improvement.



11 Repeat organizational assessment of safety culture every 18 to 24 months to review progress and sustain improvement.