

Hospital Operations Toolkit for COVID-19

Administration:

Quality Improvement

November 30, 2020

Updated September 29, 2021

Quality improvement efforts must continue during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure efficient and appropriate provision of patient care and related services, staff and patient safety, and improved hospital operations.

Evidence-based treatment and operational guidelines have been published, updated, and implemented at a lightning pace during the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments, medical specialty societies, hospital associations, and hospitals and health systems developed guidelines, reviewed evidence of effectiveness, reached consensus on some recommended actions, standardized workflows, and developed decision support tools to improve management of COVID-19 patients and overall hospital operations. These documents help hospitals manage risks to their staff and patients, provide frameworks for efficient and equitable care, and improve the experience for patients and their loved ones.

An effective response to COVID-19 requires active engagement of hospital leadership and a demonstrated commitment to quality improvement. Hospital leaders who maintain a visible presence throughout the crisis, provide timely and informative updates and communications, respond rapidly to challenges, and demonstrate their appreciation for staff can inspire confidence and commitment among staff and the community. Empowering staff to identify gaps and problem areas and propose innovative solutions contributes to overall quality improvement efforts. Scheduled and just-in-time training allow staff to keep up with the rapidly evolving pandemic and the growing COVID-19 knowledge base and contribute to staff and patient safety.

Hospitals can maintain their quality improvement efforts by:

- Maintaining awareness of updates to international, federal, and state guidance; medical specialty society policies; and published literature related to COVID-19. Many hospitals develop and circulate literature summaries among staff to keep them up-to-date on the latest information.
- Having an expert clinical group review and update guidelines for the hospital or health system.
- Developing process maps, flowcharts, decision trees, and algorithms to guide decision-making.
- Developing a standard order set in the electronic health record for COVID-19 care.

- Involving relevant staff in the development and revision of policies, procedures, and protocols, including standard work for patient care procedures, infection prevention practices, and visitor management.
- Establishing an easy to locate intranet page where all staff can access relevant documents and updates 24/7.
- Encouraging staff to report incidents, gaps, challenges, and lessons learned.
- Establishing quality improvement metrics and a corrective action program for clinical and infection prevention benchmarks.
- Documenting process improvements.
- Using data analytics to track trends and identify issues related to patient care, staffing, supplies, and finances. Many hospitals have developed “dashboards” to display key information and metrics.
- Providing regular and just-in-time training to support staff efficiency and safety.
- Promoting a culture of safety throughout the hospital, including adherence to infection prevention and control practices.
- Establishing systems for peer support throughout the pandemic, including “buddy” systems, tools for resilience building, wellness resources for staff and their dependents, and availability of 24/7 critical incident and peer support.
- Delivering patient-centered care. This includes not only care delivered in the hospital but also the use of telehealth technologies.
- Reviewing patient outcome data to identify and address areas for improvement.
- Practicing adaptive leadership to support staff and enable smooth hospital operations.

The [Telehealth/Virtual Medicine](#) section has additional information on the use of these technologies.

Resources Related to Quality Improvement

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:
 - [Apply TeamSTEPPS Approaches During COVID-19 Treatment to Keep Patients Safe](#)
 - [ACTS COVID-19 Guidance-to-Action Collaborative](#)
- American Hospital Association: [Crew Resource Management Training](#)
- ASPR TRACIE:
 - [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional Stress and Resilience](#)
 - [COVID-19: Concerns and Opportunities for Healthcare Leadership](#)
 - [Ensuring Healthcare Safety Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
 - [Exchange Issue 12: COVID-19 and Healthcare Professional Stress and Resilience](#)
 - [Healthcare Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic Speaker Series](#)
 - [Maintaining Healthcare Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic Speaker Series](#)
- Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society: [Maintaining Healthcare Quality During COVID-19 and the Future of Care](#)
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement:

- [COVID-19: Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Skills to Deploy During the Surge](#)
- [Hospital Preparedness for a COVID-19 Surge: Assessment Tool](#)
- National Association for Healthcare Quality: [Leadership Huddle Interviews](#)
- National Institutes of Health: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Treatment Guidelines](#)
- Spectrum Health: [Scientific Appraisal of COVID-19 Literature](#)
- University of Washington Medicine: [Summary of Evidence and Literature](#)

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