Error Reporting Quick Guide

8 Recommendations for a More Humane and Compassionate Culture

Four key values for creating a culture where clinicians feel safe to report their errors are:

1. Openness
2. Trust
3. Supportive relationships
4. Commitment (versus compliance)

The 8 actions leaders and all clinicians can take to foster these values are listed below. They came from my research on the Effects of Shame and Guilt Among Obstetric Clinicians which you can access at the bottom of this Quick Guide.

Actions leaders can take:

1. Engage your providers and staff in discussions about unit activities and whether they align or don’t align with the four values. Example: “Do our shift to shift hand-offs, huddles, multidisciplinary meetings, etc. demonstrate the four values?” Make adjustments according to what you discover.

2. Have “open door” accessibility for providers and staff to bring concerns and celebrate accomplishments. Praise (in private and in public) those who bring you “bad news” to overcome hesitations about sharing “negative” information.

3. Frame and address errors as learning opportunities keeping the focus of coaching on the person’s behaviors (e.g., “I’m confident that you were doing your best under the circumstances. What actions do you see that would prevent this from happening in the future?”) and not on their personality (e.g., “You were negligent”).

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4. Model the vulnerability that is needed for providers and staff to come forward with their errors by **publically sharing your own mishaps**. Let your team members know what you’re doing to learn from them and invite suggestions for improvement.

5. Ask team members for their **help to solve unit problems**, which includes how to make improvements based on what they are learning from their error reporting.

**Actions all clinicians can take:**

6. Reach out to team members who have made an error – you can **set the stage for safe sharing** by showing concern for their well-being and **sharing with them your own experience** with mishaps and what you learned from them.

7. Refrain from participating in **“blame” discussions and gossip** that can have **disparaging effects** on a colleague’s reputation.

8. Be especially mindful of the **power differences** stemming from the professional hierarchy (e.g., provider, nurse, tech, etc.) and how it can impede raising concerns and errors – for those with higher status, **provide positive reinforcement and support** for disclosure to those with lower status.

You can receive the full open access article *Effects of Shame and Guilt on Error Reporting Among Obstetric Clinicians* here.