

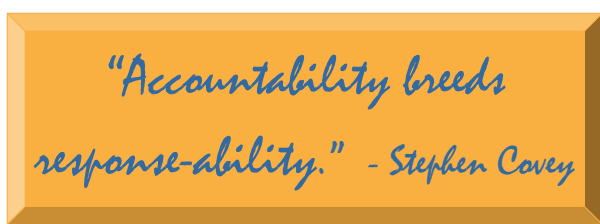


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A FORMULA FOR CONTINUOUS SURVEY READINESS

An Imperative

Whether you are accredited by one of the regulatory bodies deemed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and your respective State regulatory body or you have decided to be reviewed solely by your State agency, the imperative is that you must be ready at all times for a surveyor to enter your facility. The question for you is whether you are ready at any time for an unannounced survey? If your answer is yes, congratulations; if your answer is no, you are probably responding the same way that the vast majority of your colleagues are. Continuous survey readiness is a daunting task, yet striving for that goal is achievable with a plan for accountability.



Accreditation

Maybe not for everyone, however recent literature citations suggest that more providers and organizations are seeking accreditation outside of their respective State regulatory bodies since the impression is that third party payers in particular view outside accreditors as ensuring the highest level of quality, sometimes called the gold seal of healthcare. Accreditation may also help to gain a higher level of acceptability in the community, increase credibility with

potential or current partners, and offer an opportunity to capitalize on a unique marketing differentiation.

Only one of the increasing number of accrediting agencies conducts surveys annually. Det Norske Veritas (DNV) surveys their organizations each year which tends to support the thinking of continuous survey readiness. The other surveying agencies continue to review organization on a triennial basis.

Obviously, there are pros and cons to consider when determining whether an organization should be accredited by one of the agencies approved by CMS.

Some of the pros include:

- 1) Surveyors provide an objective set of eyes for operational processes.
- 2) Standards that provide structure for improvement
- 3) Support for continual quality improvement
- 4) An organization is able to demonstrate efficiencies instituted and their effectiveness
- 5) Raising the bar toward a higher standard of quality
- 6) Regularly scheduled surveys

Some of the cons might be:

- 1) Cost of survey
- 2) Additional standards that need to be met
- 3) Irregular timing of surveys by state agencies can cause a lax in preparedness. For example, no survey for greater than 3 years.

There are some other variables that factor into making a decision about seeking accreditation:

- 1) Is the public aware of what accreditation and the survey process mean?
- 2) Do third party payers really see an organization's accreditation as evidence of high quality?



Regardless of the choice to select an outside agency to assess an organization or to stay with your respective state agency, the mandate is to assure that you can provide a safe quality environment that you track through data collection, data analysis, and successful outcomes.

Benefits of Continuous Readiness

Regardless of your accreditation choice, State or another organization, there are significant benefits to maintaining continuous survey readiness.

There are a number of benefits that have been documented in favor of continuous readiness. One author, George Mills (ASHE, July 18, 2011) provided a summary of his observations that include:

- ⇒ Maintain a safe and functional environment for quality patient care
- ⇒ Doing the right things for the right reasons
- ⇒ Effective way to get safe high quality care
- ⇒ Last-minute ramp-ups to survey are not always realistic and often do not work as well as you want.
- ⇒ Because it's the right thing to do!

There are some additional benefits that Mr. Mills did not discuss that are worth mentioning. Continuous survey readiness must involve every member of the organization no matter what part they are involved in to assure success in terms of patient safety and quality. Teamwork is essential as a way of meeting standards for the sole purpose of keeping patients safe and changing the culture to support patient centered care. Every patient is a VIP who deserves the best care and service that can be provided.

Practical Strategies for Continuous Readiness

1. Use of technology can be beneficial when preparing for survey.

A close working relationship between departments and information technology is essential since there is too much information collected to continue to do pencil and paper audits. Software programs that track employee's orientation content and annual updates, medical staff credentials and credentialing process, organizational policy updates, collection of data elements for quality initiatives, maintenance mandatory checks, meeting minutes, and the list can go on forever eases the pressure of finding documents and documentation in the first few hours that surveyors are present in the facility.



2. Develop a survey preparation structure that works best for the organization, and includes all levels of personnel within the organization. The brand for the structure could be:



Remember, keep the structure meaningful and productive. One suggestion may look like this:



Goals of the survey preparation structure:

- A. Avoid redundancy
- B. Involve leadership and staff in each of the groups
- C. Use meeting principles to be productive:
 - a) Select the right participants
 - b) Develop an agenda with time allotted for each topic and stick to it
 - c) Identify roles: skilled facilitator who keeps the group on topic; scribe with a structure to meeting minute-taking
 - d) Establish ground rules
 - e) Develop a team charter and dashboard which tracks progress (use technology)
 - f) Start and finish the meeting on time
 - g) Determine assignments for the next meeting prior to completion of the meeting
 - h) Develop the next meeting's agenda as a group – each group member should report out at each meeting to assure 100% engagement
 - i) Thank the group for their time and participation
 - j) Celebrate milestones every 30, 60, 90, 110 days
- D. Conduct an assessment to determine gaps in meeting/exceeding standards
- E. Tackle the “big frogs” first, the concerns that cause you the most angst during survey. Focus on the hot topics that seem to be the highlights for the surveyors, such as infection prevention and control, life safety, environment of care.
- F. Report progress up to QIC monthly
- G. Keep the board informed of progress and performance improvement.

3. Determine **Accountability**.

Accountability starts with each of us. You can't make someone accountable; it is up to them. You can, however, identify consequences when someone is not accountable. The key is the follow through. For example, you are part of the clinical group for survey readiness, and your assignment is to lead a group who is conducting the gap analysis for each of the clinical groups and report back to the whole group in 4 weeks. Prior to the meeting, each member reports back to you on the gaps they discovered, but you have to report that you only completed 50% of your assignment. What to do? Where's your accountability?

Find ambassadors who can energize each of the groups and continue to keep the group members excited about improving the quality of care.

4. **Educate**, educate, educate.

Provide education to all personnel within the organization through social media, newsletters, town hall meetings, presentations by council members, celebrations, posting of dashboards, use of fun games that address standards such as Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune with prizes, spot check responses to standards during executive rounds on all shifts in all departments, and have "lunch and learns" that involve staff teaching their colleagues about the standards and Conditions of Participation.

At annual skill fairs, have poster

presentations that highlight the dashboards of each of the groups and their progress. Have staff grade progress and determine "best performing council".

5. Build friendly **competition**.

Humans are naturally competitive, therefore determining who meets and sustains standards with buy-in can be a motivating factor for groups.

6. Conduct **mock surveys and tracers** on a regular basis starting right after a survey up to the next survey.

Mock surveys should be work that is meaningful. Select individuals who are familiar with the standards. This can be a learning moment if the "surveyors" survey areas that they are not totally familiar with, for example, have a pharmacist inspect a nursing unit or a quality person inspect plant operations. Such a process can benefit everyone.

7. Seek out ways that other organizations are preparing for survey through professional organizations' **networking opportunities** that may help you.

8. **Culture Change** is necessary.

It has been suggested that culture change occurs over a period of 3-5 years, however there is considerable evidence that many organizations have successfully changed their culture in less time with incremental positive outcomes. Stress the importance that what is being done is not only to meet standards, but the key is to improve care.

Accountability

There were four people and an important job to be done...



Everybody



Anybody



Somebody



Nobody

Nobody knew that *Everybody* was not going to do it. *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would do it. *Anybody* could have done it. In the end, *Nobody* did it.

Summary

Some and maybe all of the above-mentioned strategies can be used as defined or can be adjusted to meet your needs. It is important to create a culture within your organization that supports the #1 priority of providing quality care that keeps patient's safe. Each member of the team must be engaged and embrace the principle of Do No Harm. Adhering to the guidelines in the Conditions of Participation (CoP) and any additional standards promulgated by regulatory agencies provides the structure and interpretation which will assist in achieving continuous survey readiness.

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.”
—Henry Ford

HealthTechS3 Can Help!

HealthTechS3 consultants can help you through the different processes for assuring positive results from survey, and can conduct an objective mock survey for you. Remember, together everyone achieves more!

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