

Root-Cause Analysis

The terms failure analysis, incident investigation, and root-cause analysis (RCA) are used by organizations to refer to their problem-solving approach in response to sentinel or serious events. Regardless of what it's called, there are three basic questions to every investigation:

1. What's the problem?
2. Why did it happen (what are the causes)?
3. What specifically should be done to prevent it?

To achieve the ultimate goal of preventing future occurrences the following tips should be considered:

- ▶ **TEAM:** Create an interdisciplinary RCA team whose core members have multiple skill sets and the ability to commit to the root-cause analysis process.
- ▶ **INFORMATION GATHERING:** The team should gather information before the meeting such as interviews, clinical literature and event data for similar events.
- ▶ **PROCESS INVESTIGATION AND IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES:** The team should consider creating a flowchart that depicts what did happen versus what should have happened.
- ▶ **IDENTIFYING ROOT CAUSES:** Identifying root causes is one of the main goals of the incident investigation process and depends heavily on continually asking why until the answer received is something beyond the span of control of the organization, and on finding the causal factors.
- ▶ **CORRECTIVE ACTIONS:** When developing recommendations to prevent recurrence or to reduce the harm of future similar events, make sure that the actions will be implemented organization-wide rather than only focused on a single issue, unit or department.

By considering the tips mentioned above organizations will have a comprehensive approach to system analysis to help ensure that measures are in place to prevent or reduce harm in the future. ECRI Institute PSO has developed a systematic approach to analyzing healthcare organizations' root-cause analysis processes and depth of organizations' proposed recommendations. We provide direct feedback to assist healthcare organizations with the RCA process.

How Can We Help You?

Whether you have questions about the final rule or want to learn more about ECRI Institute PSO and/or support for other PSOs, we would be happy to hear from you. Please contact ECRI Institute at psos@ecri.org or call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558.