

Gaps in Staff Training and Orientation Jeopardize Patients

When you hear about adverse events involving lapses in training or orientation, you might think something like, “Of course, new staff always have so much to learn.” But you’d be making a poor assumption: in many events seen by ECRI Institute PSO, even experienced staff members were not familiar with specific equipment, department policies, or work environment. And, of course, both new and experienced healthcare practitioners need training to wield the ever-evolving technology used to care for today’s patients.

Therefore, the strongest way to reduce gaps in training and orientation for new, temporary, or agency staff, as well as any staff members new to a department, is to create systems-based processes that ensure all such “new” staff members receive thorough training and orientation—with no exceptions. Systems-based solutions, such as standardized procedures, help ensure that parts of the training process that might otherwise be seen as unnecessary do not fall through the gaps.

Events seen by ECRI Institute PSO have involved care providers’ unfamiliarity with their area, incomplete orientation of temporary employees, insufficient or no training on new or upgraded technology, and the incorrect assumption by managers that staff can operate basic equipment without considering variation among brands or models. ECRI Institute PSO offers a checklist of orientation and training essentials; members can log in for more guidance here.

When preparing to introduce staff members to new equipment, areas, or procedures, organization and department leadership should:

- ▶ Support staff education through the provision of adequate time and resources.
- ▶ Require all trainees to demonstrate competency with training material.
- ▶ Identify gaps in staff training via event reports and data gathering.
- ▶ Consider the need for staff training when purchasing new equipment.
- ▶ Monitor outcomes with new technology to identify a need for additional training.
- ▶ Use checklists to efficiently orient staff to a new department or area.

The importance of building solutions into the organization's systems and culture cannot be overstated. If the organization culture respects the importance of fully orienting staff members to each area of care, including specific equipment, tools, and policies, then staff members will see the value of such thorough orientation. Likewise, enforcing policies that uphold accountability for staff orientation and education also underlines the value that the organization places on staff education. If organization leaders need a front-line perspective, patient safety walkrounds provide that as well as an opportunity to seek suggestions from staff members. The organization should also review its training and orientation programs: do they engage staff members? Are they convenient for staff? Are they accessible? Are they available in multiple formats? If employee education is supported by organization leadership, department managers, and the organization's culture, it will become an integral part of the organization's focus on patient safety.



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 psa@ecri.org or call (610) 825-6000, ext. 5558.