

Activity

To make care safer we must start by thinking and talking about it differently because small changes have big impact.

To kick start your journey of rethinking patient safety, host “Safety Conversations” with your leaders, staff, volunteers, patients, residents and clients, care partners and community.

What are safety conversations?

Safety conversations are an important step in creating safety, responding to and managing harm after it occurs and building a proactive patient safety culture.

They are respectful discussions between two or more people organizing, delivering, seeking and/or receiving care.

They also foster a culture shift that promotes an understanding that patient safety, staff safety and cultural safety go hand-in-hand, recognizing that all users and providers of care create safety together.

Safety conversations help us understand what harm, and feeling and being safe, mean to all.

Why have safety conversations?

Safety conversations change the way we think about safety. They help expand our focus from past harm to a more proactive, holistic view of safety. They promote the ‘practice of inquiry’ and help place value on soft intelligence (listening, observing and perceiving).

Through conversations, we empower a collective responsibility for safety – a culture of respect, trust, collaboration and open communication where patients, residents, clients, care partners, healthcare providers and staff feel safe to explore, speak up and act¹.

Below are steps you can take to plan and carry-out effective safety conversations.

How to host a safety conversation...

TIME

Any time is a good time, based on your audience and format.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

Variable

WHO TO INCLUDE

- All clinical and nonclinical staff, regardless of their role and position
- Physicians
- Patients, residents, clients, and care partners
- Volunteers
- Community partners and members of the public
- Board members

YOUR TOOLS

- A brief presentation that provides an overview of a new approach to safety
- Copies of Healthcare Excellence Canada’s [Rethinking Patient Safety](#), as background
- Healthcare Excellence Canada’s [web page](#) for further information
- Facilitation tools such as sticky notes, a flip chart, markers, a white board, etc.
- A method for recording discussions and action items

Hosting a Safety Conversation on Rethinking Patient Safety

The goal is to introduce a new approach to safety to all members of your organization including clinical staff, other healthcare providers, non-clinical staff, patients, residents, clients, family members, care partners, volunteers, leaders, executives, and board members. The process you use to conduct your conversations will depend on your audience however, the steps to follow will be largely the same.

1. Plan the event.

- Select your target audience – e.g., staff, students, senior leaders, board members, patients, residents, clients, care partners, volunteers or public.
- Group your audiences as appropriate for your organization.
- Determine your event format – e.g., staff meeting, focus group, town hall.
- Select the date, time and duration of the event.
- Book a venue.
- Select a host or moderator and any guest speakers you may wish to include.

2. Define your objectives and adjust according to your target audience.

- Create a sense of urgency for and inspire action on patient safety.
- Foster a culture of curiosity, open communication, inclusion, collaboration and proactivity for safer care.
- Demonstrate organizational commitment to safer care.
- Introduce participants to Healthcare Excellence Canada's suggested approach to safer care as outlined in our [Rethinking Patient Safety](#) discussion guide.
- Highlight how this approach is different from what your organization may have been doing:
 - Safer care encompasses all forms of harm – physical and psychological, including culturally unsafe care.
 - Safety is about everyone, in all contexts of care.
 - We must prevent harm **and** promote safety.
- Promote discussion.

3. Promote your event using a variety of methods to help reach your target audience.

4. Plan your agenda and adjust according to your audience, meeting format and room set up.

- Use a variety of facilitation methods to help engage all participants in the discussion and dialogue. Visit liberatingstructures.com for a menu of innovative options to help unleash creativity, openness, and engagement.
- Share a video or invite a patient/resident/client or care partner to speak about why safe care matters to them.
- Facilitate a discussion of “what does patient safety mean to you?”. This could be done as part of a round table introductions (e.g., name, role/position, and what does patient safety mean to you?).
- Deliver a brief presentation about a new approach to safety.
- Facilitate a discussion. Using a variety of facilitation methods, discuss 1–3 questions from the *Rethinking Patient Safety* discussion guide:
 - What comes to mind when you think of healthcare harm?
 - What does patient safety mean to you?
 - How is the presence of safety different from the absence of harm?
 - What makes you feel safe?
 - Who do you speak to when you have a safety concern or compliment? How can you create safe spaces for people to talk about safety?
 - How have you approached safety in the past? How might you approach it differently now? What could you start doing? What could you stop doing?
 - How can you encourage the sharing of power among patients, residents, clients, caregivers, communities, providers, staff, and leaders to enhance safer care?
 - How can action on patient safety help reduce health inequities? How can action on health inequities help improve patient safety?
 - How could you use this document to advance patient safety in your work or personal life?

- Follow each question with a debrief by:
 - Asking 2–3 participants to share what they discussed.
 - Summarizing what was heard and adding any key messages not covered.
 - Highlighting any actions resulting from the discussion.
- Conduct an activity:
 - Have participants fill out a poster [What makes you feel safe?](#)
 - Have participants document on sticky notes or a flip chart:
 - One question I will ask my patient/resident/client is...
 - One question I will ask my staff...
 - One change I can action is...

- Conclude the event:
 - Summarize the session, key learnings and any actions identified.
 - Highlight next steps.

5. Evaluate the session and use learnings to improve the next session.

- What went well?
- Even better if..
- One thing I learned...

6. Share findings with colleagues and embed learnings and safety conversations in your safety strategy and practice.

7. Identify your next audience and plan your next event.

Tips for hosting a safety conversation:

MAKE IT SAFE TO TALK ABOUT SAFETY

A big part of making safety conversations successful involves normalizing them. However, not everyone will feel safe to talk about safety. Before safety conversations can take place, recognize power dynamics that may exist and work to create an environment that encourages open dialogue and promotes exploration and curiosity for all.

ASK QUESTIONS

Safety conversations are built around the practice of asking questions. By asking questions, you are taking the first step and ensuring that the onus is not on others to speak up.

LISTEN

Listen to and learn from others. Acknowledge them as experts. Respect cultural differences. Active listening and reflection, recognizes that all perspectives are valued and heard.

REFLECT

On what you are hearing and share what you are learning with others.

ACT

Follow through on the information and insights you have collected from your events. Prepare a clear outline of steps that will be taken so everyone knows what to expect and when.

KEEP HAVING SAFETY CONVERSATIONS (DON'T HAVE JUST ONE)

Establish a schedule for hosting safety conversation events to ensure everyone has an opportunity to be part of safer care. Include as part of the 'on-boarding' process for new staff (clinical and non-clinical), leaders, Board members, and volunteers.

For more information on championing safer care in your organization, visit

ExploreSaferCare.ca

Reference

1. Gilbert R, Asselbergs M, Davis D, et al. Rethinking patient safety: A discussion guide for patients, healthcare providers and leaders. Healthcare Excellence Canada; 2023.

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