



RHQN NEWSLETTER

July 2010

Developing, Demonstrating and Documenting Staff Safety Competency

Wouldn't it be nice if "healthcare quality" was as identifiable as a 'bulls eye' painted on the side of your hospital building? As long as we continue to hit the bulls eye, we demonstrate that we are a quality organization. But, it isn't that easy, it isn't that obvious, and it isn't that singular in focus. This month, we want to look at staff competence as a demonstration of quality. This is not a new idea or principle. As a matter of fact, it has always been high on the Washington State Department of Health's list of survey agenda items and, unfortunately, high on their list of common citations for failure to comply/demonstrate.

We have talked about certain aspects of this issue before. The April RHQN Newsletter, "**...On the Issue of Staff Competence**," addressed the need for a comprehensive program of assessment, demonstration, and documentation of all aspects of staff competence. This month, the RHQN Members Conference Call focused on the general and department specific safety competencies required of all employees. It is very important to point out that safety training is not generic, not just facility specific, it is department and job description specific.

To develop a process for providing safety education, your administration/safety committee would need to do the following:

- Identify what education is required/mandated,
- Develop a mechanism for providing the education (computer based learning modules, videotape modules, subscription to an online or net based learning service),
- Determine acceptable standards of competency,
- Develop a process for documentation of competency, and
- Assure rapid access to accurate competency documentation.

Mandates for safety education come from many entities or regulatory agencies. These bodies may include:

- The Washington State Department of Health,
- The Washington State Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH, a.k.a. L&I),
- The State Fire Marshal,
- Various WACs and RCWs,
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services,
- The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and
- The DOH Office of Radiation Protection.

The most common safety education competency courses include the following, but each facility may add more to meet their specific needs:

- Infection Prevention/Bloodborne Pathogens,
- Body Mechanics/Ergonomics,

- Worker Right to Know/Hazardous Chemicals,
- HIPAA Compliance,
- Code Review,
- Workplace Violence,
- Disaster/Emergency Response,
- Fire Safety,
- Electrical Safety, and
- Radiation Safety.

In addition, it is important to remember that there are department specific safety competencies which need to be done annually. These include:

- Department specific fire safety,
- Worker Right to Know/Hazardous Chemicals, and
- Disaster/Emergency Response.

Here are some easy guidelines for implementing the process you have selected in order to provide safety education. The process you choose must provide information that is current and facility specific. For that reason, you may want to check the copyrights on materials you use for safety education in order to assure that the information is up-to-date. It is very important to remember that for every safety module you provide, there must be an 'in-house' expert available to answer questions on a timely basis. All safety modules must have a mechanism for demonstrating an understanding/competency. You must provide a quiz or some other means of assessing competency and you must establish a minimum passing score on the safety module's quiz.

An audio recording of this month's Members Conference Call entitled "**Developing and Strengthening Staff Competency: From Age Specific Competencies to Workplace Violence Training, How Are You Doing?**" will walk you through the process of evaluating your existing safety education program, strengthening it, and hitting the bulls eye of quality based staff competence in the safety arena. If you would like to hear more about strengthening staff competence through safety education, please contact Randy Benson, RHQN Executive Director, at randyb@wsha.org or (206) 577-1821.

Upcoming Member Conference Calls

Bev McCullough (RHQN QI Manager) and I have split the Members Conference Call topic list for 2010. We will be alternating the monthly calls. If you have a topic suggestion, please call or e-mail Randy Benson (RHQN Executive Director) at randyb@wsha.org or at (206) 577-1821.

- August 10, 10:30 a.m. - **Clinical Best Practices and Lessons Learned**, facilitated by Bev McCullough, RHQN Quality Improvement Manager
- September 14, 10:30 a.m. - **Finding A Champion: One of the Foundations of Successful Change**, presented by Randy Benson, RHQN Executive Director
- October 5, 10:30 a.m. - **Clinical Best Practices and Lessons Learned**, facilitated by Bev McCullough, RHQN Quality Improvement Manager
- November 9, 10:30 a.m. - **The Magic Lantern, Shedding Light on Employee Satisfaction and Just Culture**, presented by Randy Benson, RHQN Executive Director

If you have ideas, comments, questions, need additional resources or a consultation, contact Randy Benson, RHQN Executive Director, at (206) 577-1821 or randyb@wsha.org