



Supporting a Just Culture in Long-Term Care

Purpose

To provide a brief overview of information and resources for Long-Term Care Homes interested in advancing a just culture in their organization.

Background

Culture is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an organization.¹ A [just culture](#) is a small part of a larger healthcare organizational culture – ‘the way we do things around here’ – that strives to make care as safe as it can be.¹

When healthcare organizations work within a just culture, there is trust that everyone will be treated fairly when something goes wrong with patient care. It creates an environment in which people (healthcare providers and patients) feel safe to report errors and concerns about things that could lead to preventable patient harm. Reports of errors and patient safety hazards are important sources of information about weaknesses in the system that are addressed to improve patient safety.

As described by Justice Gillese, “Just culture is an important part of a safety culture, and it is founded on the assumption that all human beings make mistakes, and that those mistakes give us insight into how to avoid repeating them in the future.”² Further, in a just culture, a distinction is drawn among intentional acts, reckless acts, and acts that arise from unforeseen circumstance or complications of care. People are accountable for the care they deliver and should be informed about how their actions and errors will be reviewed when something goes wrong with patient care. Most importantly, the learnings are used to improve the safety of the system.

Incident Reporting and Learning in LTC

In a just culture, the care and safety of the residents is the focus of the team, and any medication incident is embraced from a learning perspective. In this environment, prompt reporting of incidents is encouraged, and there are resources as well as expertise to analyze incidents, identify key system contributing factors and design and implement rigorous quality improvement interventions.

¹ What is a Just Culture -HQCA <https://justculture.hqca.ca/what-is-a-just-culture>

² Public Inquiry into the Safety and Security of Residents in the Long-Term Care Homes System. Justice E. Gillese. [Public Inquiry into the Safety and Security of Residents in the Long-Term Care Homes System – REPORT – Volume 3 \(longtermcareinquiry.ca\)](#)



How Can You Establish a Just Culture in Your Home?

1. Build awareness

- Attend an ISMP Canada workshop Incident Analysis for LTC and Safety Culture Assessment:
[Education Events | ISMP Canada \(ismp-canada.org\)](https://www.ismp-canada.org/education-events)
- Watch this NHS video on Just Culture:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zje765OEggs>

2. Talk with Staff

- Questions for Reflecting on a Just Culture with your Staff (see Appendix 1)

3. Tools

- Just Culture Guide for Leaders Responding to Incidents
https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NHS_0932_JC_Poster_A3.pdf
- Alberta Health Services Just Culture Guiding Principles
<https://albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hp/ps/if-hp-ps-ahs-just-culture-principles.pdf>

Appendix 1 - Questions for Reflecting on a Just Culture with your Staff

Adapted from: [SOPS Nursing Home Survey Items and Composites \(ahrq.gov\)](https://www.ahrq.gov/sops/)

Nonpunitive Response to Mistakes
1. Are staff blamed when a resident is harmed?
2. Are staff afraid to report their mistakes?
3. Are staff treated fairly when they make mistakes?
Feedback and Communication About Incidents
4. In this long-term care home, do we talk about ways to keep incidents from happening again?
5. Does the staff tell someone if they see something that might harm a resident?
6. In this long-term care home, do we discuss ways to keep residents safe from harm?
Communication Openness
7. Are staff ideas and suggestions valued in this long-term care home?
8. Is it easy for staff to speak up about problems in this long-term care home?

The entire survey is available on-line and can be used as an anonymous patient safety culture staff survey.

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