

Toolkit components, resources, professional assistance

User's guide (print and CD-ROM versions enclosed)

A comprehensive guide explains how to prepare, promote, conduct and collect surveys. Use it to assess how effectively your hospital or clinic communicates with a diverse patient population.

Customizable survey materials (print and CD-ROM versions enclosed)

Professionally developed surveys and support materials help you obtain constructive feedback from distinct populations in your hospital or clinic. The accompanying CD-ROM features customizable cover letters to distribute with your surveys, resources for conducting focus groups and interviews, a sample protocol for obtaining internal review board approval, and more.

Promotional/marketing materials

To help you build awareness about your surveys and improve response rates, the kit includes promotional buttons, stickers and posters. You'll also find a customizable flier and poster on the toolkit CD-ROM.

Comprehensive analysis guide and data tools (CD-ROM only)

Whether you elect to analyze your own survey data or prefer to let the American Medical Association (AMA) Ethical Force Program do it for you, this toolkit provides everything you need to track and interpret the raw data you obtain from your surveys. Turn to the step-by-step analysis guide for complete instructions on how to get the most from the toolkit's data entry tools.

Post-survey follow-up materials

These handy references—including a staff survey follow-up template (print and CD-ROM versions enclosed) and PowerPoint® presentations—help you structure post-assessment communications to staff and leaders about your project. Display the staff survey follow-up template on your wall or desktop as a guide, or customize the materials on the accompanying CD-ROM with key findings and improvement goals tailored to your hospital or clinic.

CD-ROM

This all-in-one resource features electronic versions of the toolkit contents—including all customizable templates—for easy printing from your desktop.

Additional support materials

This toolkit also includes the AMA Ethical Force Program's "Improving Communication—Improving Care" report, which describes how organizations like yours can help ensure effective, patient-centered communication, plus an accordion folder to help you get organized and keep your project on track.

Patient surveys in Spanish are included on the toolkit CD-ROM. For patient surveys in Chinese, Polish, Vietnamese or other languages, call the AMA at (800) 621-8335.

About the AMA Ethical Force Program

This toolkit was developed by the AMA Ethical Force Program. The AMA created the Ethical Force Program in 1997, based on the belief that developing tools to help health care organizations assess and learn about their support for professional ethics could provide value in improving the quality of health care delivery. The Ethical Force Program is guided by a diverse group of leaders from stakeholder organizations across the health care system.

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AMA Ethical Force Program toolkit

Getting started ►►

How this toolkit can help your organization

Effective communication is essential for ensuring quality patient care. By providing a comprehensive assessment of how leaders, staff and patients experience your organization's communication performance across cultures, languages and health literacy levels, this toolkit can help you:

- Demonstrate your commitment to effective communication, which can help meet accreditation requirements and improve patient and staff satisfaction.
- Learn whether your communication policies and strategies are effective and patient-centered.
- Identify areas of strong and weak performance so you can decide where to focus resources and quality improvement efforts.
- Inform efforts to improve compliance with regulatory and accreditation standards.
- Compare performance across units or between organizations.
- Track changes in communication habits and perceptions over time.
- Improve communication with all patient populations and, ultimately, improve quality of care and patient outcomes.

Designed to provide a 360-degree assessment of how effectively your hospital, health center or clinic communicates with diverse patient populations, the AMA Ethical Force Program toolkit can identify areas for improvement to enhance patient care.

Comprehensive feedback, measurable results

Use this toolkit to survey the communication habits and perceptions of four distinct populations.

- Staff (the staff survey is appropriate for clinical and nonclinical staff)
 - Modular version—lets you track staff performance in a specific content area, or module, over time
 - No-patient-contact version—designed for staff who do not have regular job-based interactions with patients (e.g., staff in medical records, accounting/billing, research, engineering, public relations)
- Patients (including those with limited English proficiency or limited health literacy)
 - Pediatric version—a modified patient survey for the parents or guardians of pediatric patients
- Executive staff (e.g., your organization's CEO, president, board chair)
- Organizational policy team (this survey is designed to be completed by a team of leaders and managers who are familiar with organizational policy and procedures)

Support when you need it

Offering step-by-step instructions, survey instruments, templates, professional assistance and more, the toolkit contains all you need to complete each stage of your assessment project:

- Preparation and assessment—look to the user's guide to help you determine a timeline and budget for your assessment project, select the group(s) you wish to survey, promote participation, customize surveys, conduct focus groups and more.
- Data collection and analysis—a detailed analysis guide is included, as well as data entry templates in both Microsoft® Excel and SPSS® formats.
- Putting results into action—the toolkit provides templates to help you structure communications and report your results to staff and other stakeholders. You can then use your results for strategic planning and developing quality improvement goals.

Have questions? Need help? Interested in purchasing additional support services?

Let the AMA Ethical Force Program handle some of the workload for you by purchasing one of three survey assistance packages:

- **Basic**—the AMA customizes your surveys with your organization's name or logo, includes PDFs of the surveys for you to copy and distribute to patients and staff, and provides up to two hours of survey assistance by phone.
- **Intermediate**—all basic features, plus the AMA assembles your survey packets, including postage-paid envelopes, so that surveys can be mailed directly to the AMA for third-party data entry; tracks survey responses and response rates; manages data entry; and provides you with a clean data set in Microsoft Excel or other data file format.
- **Complete**—all of the above, plus the AMA provides data analysis and a detailed report of the results, including specific recommendations for areas where your organization might best focus quality improvement efforts.

The AMA Ethical Force Program can help.

www.ethicalforce.org

Frequently asked questions

This toolkit can help you achieve an organization-wide focus on patient-centered communication. Patient-centered communication is respectful of and responsive to patients' needs, beliefs, values and preferences. Any communication between individuals or groups in a health care organization can be patient-centered, including oral, written and nonverbal communications.

Why is patient-centered communication important?

Using patient-centered communication techniques during health care encounters has been shown to improve a patient's satisfaction, adherence to treatment regimes, acceptance of preventive services and clinical outcomes. The patient-centered approach is especially useful when communicating with populations at greater risk for experiencing communication gaps as a result of cultural differences, limited English proficiency or limited health literacy.

Why is it important to assess organizational communication performance?

While most communication assessment happens at the level of the patient-physician encounter, an organization's policies and climate play a significant role in facilitating or hindering effective communication. Assessing communication performance allows an organization to gather data on patient, staff and leader experiences, which can be used for strategic planning and to monitor performance improvements over time.

Can I modify the surveys?

The surveys were developed to be general enough for use in most hospitals and physician practices/clinics. However, you may find that the surveys use different terms from those used in your organization or that you might like to ask additional questions. While it is possible to customize the surveys, the AMA strongly recommends making only those changes that are absolutely necessary, as changes may affect the reliability and validity of the surveys.

How long does it take to complete this toolkit assessment?

The time it takes you to complete the assessment will vary depending on your available resources (e.g., staff, budget). The AMA Ethical Force Program offers survey assistance packages (see opposite panel) if you'd like to purchase additional support services. If you opt to have the AMA assist you, it will take about six weeks to complete the survey process and another two weeks to complete the data entry and analysis. If you need approval from your internal review board before beginning your project, add a few more weeks to your overall timeline.

Do I have to assess all units or areas within my hospital or clinic?

We suggest that you begin your assessment by using the toolkit in only one or two units. This will provide more focused and actionable results.

Does the Joint Commission have standards for communication performance?

Yes. Standard RI.2.100 states: "The organization respects the patient's right to and need for effective communication." For more information on related Joint Commission standards and other regulations, see Appendix D in the enclosed "Improving Communication—Improving Care" report.