



Campaign Intervention Fact Sheet

Getting Boards on Boards

Hospital Board of Trustees and senior leadership have more of an active role in improving quality and patient safety than ever before. Specifically, there has been a large demand for Board of Trustees and CEOs to have greater accountability for quality and patient safety practices, and it has been suggested that quality and patient safety should have equal attention as financial activity and growth in hospital board meetings.

One primary function of senior leaders in healthcare is to support their “followers” in developing behaviors, skills, habits, processes and technologies that lead reliably to dramatically improved performance. This influence had elements of both “push” (making the status quo uncomfortable) and “pull” (making the future attractive). An activated board, in partnership with executive leadership, can set system-level expectations and accountability for high performance and elimination of harm. This leadership, when properly conducted, can work to dramatically and continually improve the quality of care in a hospital.

Six Things All Boards Should Do to Improve Quality and Reduce Harm

1. Setting Aims:

Set a specific aim to reduce harm this year. Make an explicit, public commitment to measurable quality improvement (e.g., reduction in unnecessary mortality and harm), establishing a clear aim for the facility or system.

2. Getting Data and Hearing Stories:

Select and review progress toward safer care as the first agenda item at every board meeting, grounded in transparency, and putting a “human face” on harm data.

3. Establishing and Monitoring System-Level Measures:

Identify a small group of organization-wide “roll-up” measures of patient safety (e.g., facility-wide harm, risk adjusted mortality) that are continually updated and are made transparent to the entire organization and all of its customers.

4. Changing the Environment, Policies, and Culture:

Commit to establish and maintain an environment that is respectful, fair, and just for all who experience the pain and loss as a result of avoidable harm and adverse outcomes: the patients, their families, and the staff at the sharp end of error.

5. Learning... Starting with the Board:

Develop your capability as a board. Learn about how “best in the world” boards work with executive and MD leaders to reduce harm. Set an expectation for similar levels of education and training for all staff.

6. Establishing Executive Accountability:

Oversee the effective execution of a plan to achieve your aims to reduce harm including executive team accountability for clear quality improvement targets.