

## Midwest Hospital Implements Safety Coaches to Fight COVID-19



Like many other organizations in the nation in mid-March, a hospital in the Midwest found themselves gearing up for their fight against COVID-19.

As an organization with a deep safety culture, they immediately identified five goals to direct preparations and response efforts across the state.

- Mitigate the spread of COVID-19
- Enable their workforce
- Create a safe environment for their team
- Be good stewards of scarce resources
- Be a trusted source of information

The president at the hospital released a video outlining these goals for staff and proposed a call to action. He asked staff who may not be working due to halted elective procedures

and office closures, to work as Safety Coaches in COVID-19 dedicated units, to help identify and correct gaps in care and safety. The call was answered by approximately 30 selfless nurses and medical assistants.

The Director of Quality & Safety developed and spearheaded the Safety Coach program along with the hospital's Infection Preventionist, who was integral to the success and ongoing support for Safety Coaches. The Vice President & Chief Nursing Officer, also supported the project and provided support for managers and staff.

The goal of this program was to keep staff safe and healthy during this challenging time. Safety Coaches observed team members working with patients and prompted them to use best practices to promote a culture of safety and peer collaboration.

Safety Coaches were placed in the ICU, Progressive Level Unit, Medical-Surgical Unit and Emergency Departments where COVID-19 patients were present. They met every morning to receive unit assignments, learn about new developments from the previous day, and receive updates on hotspots, areas or specific processes demonstrating noncompliance or safety concerns that needed attention. They also met midday to discuss findings, ask questions and identify any patterns or trends in observations. A phone was provided to each Safety Coach so he/she could quickly contact leadership, infection prevention and control and quality personnel if a question or issue arose.

#### **Safety Coaches utilized Tracers with AMP® to close gaps**

The Safety Coaches utilized [Tracers with AMP®](#), an electronic tool from Joint Commission Resources, to analyze performance, identify hot spots, and build reports to share with other departments. The redeployed staff were quickly trained on the tool. Medical Assistants from physician offices participated in a three-hour class, and nurses attended a one-hour class. The training included how to use the tracer tool, observation and documentation criteria, and tools and techniques to maintain a collaborative and educational approach to identifying and correcting gaps in care and safety. The hospital's Accreditation & Regulatory Team, created COVID-19 tracers utilizing templates that were available in the tool.

Safety Coaches used these tracer templates to track data on observations such as was hand hygiene performed and was donning and doffing PPE completed correctly. Typically, data is entered directly into the tool. However, due to infection prevention concerns, the data was collected on paper tracer forms and was scanned and sent to the Clinical Quality Analyst, a remote employee who then entered the information into Tracers with AMP®. The data entered was reviewed and analyzed using Tracers with AMP® reporting tools and staff was able to drill into more detailed information through an enhanced feature in the tool, Illuminate Analytics™. These reports were used to:

- Identify “hot spots” throughout the hospital
- Report out in daily Incident Command calls
- Communicate with professional development staff and managers to close any gaps in care and safety

#### **Outcomes**

When the Director of Quality & Safety was asked about the future of the Safety Coach role in a post-COVID-19 world, the response was swift – “The Safety Coach will never go away.” She acknowledged there is an upfront time commitment to identifying and training staff for the role, but the return on investment (ROI) is well worth it. The ability to collect data for more than 2000 observations, and the analysis and immediate improvement that resulted, would not have happened without this role and the use of Tracers with AMP®.

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*The ability to collect data for more than 2,000 observations, and the analysis and immediate improvement that resulted, would not have happened without the Safety Coaches and the use of Tracers with AMP®.*

**- Director of Quality & Safety**

As surgery units began to slowly open and medical practices started to function again on a limited basis, the Safety Coaches were being called back to resume regular job duties. The Hospital President and leadership are working together to keep the Safety Coaches in place until their regular units are running at full capacity. When that time comes, the role of Safety Coaches post-COVID-19 will certainly continue.

Safety Coaches recognized that they can also use the Tracers tool when they return to their previous roles. The Director of Quality and Safety felt the education that was provided in the beginning of the program was instrumental in making the program a success. “You can hand a tool to someone, but they need to understand the intent.”

### **Lessons Learned**

The hospital shared some insights learned for organizations looking to start their own Safety Coach program:

- Our only regret is not doing this faster (if even only a week earlier).
- PPE is very precious.
- Safety Coaches will enhance existing tracer activity.
- Staff to staff culture was great. There was value and employees felt we were keeping them safe.
- No one ever said that they didn't have time or were too busy. Instead, we heard that “we do not have the luxury to not do this.”
- There was a lot of doing, checking and acting.
- Be creative. It is okay to try something new and it is okay if that something new needs to change too.

### **Recovery Plans**

When conversations began about how to reopen services, units and offices that had been closed for 6-8 weeks, the hospital President asked the question, “What will keep us safe?” He determined using Tracers with AMP® would be an effective tool to use for the reopening process. A recovery team was put together and a plan for reopening was created. Part of that plan included a meeting of key staff from Facilities Management, Infection Prevention and Regulatory to develop a tracers tool that could be used to help managers discuss and review risk points of reopening. While using this tracer, they were able to identify gaps in care and safety. Through supplemental education, training and support, these gaps were resolved before re-opening.

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