Is Your Organization Ready for TeamSTEPPS™?

Answering these questions can help your institution understand its level of readiness to initiate the TeamSTEPPS program. You may find it helpful to have a colleague review your responses or to answer the questions with a larger group (e.g., senior leaders).

Defining Need

Has your institution clearly defined the need to initiate a teamwork-based patient safety initiative for culture change?

1. Have you clearly defined the need that is driving your institution to consider implementing TeamSTEPPS?

   An organization is more likely to be ready to undertake a TeamSTEPPS initiative when it has objective information to support the need for improving specific areas. Objective information can originate from a variety of sources, including adverse event and near-miss reports, root cause analyses or failure modes and effects analyses, administering the AHRQ Patient Safety Culture Survey, surveys of patient or staff satisfaction, and unit- or site-specific process and outcome measures (patient flow, hospital acquired infection rates, preventable deaths).

2. Is building a stronger teamwork and safety culture an appropriate strategy to address your institution's need?

   TeamSTEPPS is a teamwork system that offers a powerful solution to improving collaboration and communication within your institution. Teamwork has been found to be one of the key initiatives within patient safety. Patient safety experts agree that communication and other teamwork skills are essential for providing quality health care and preventing and mitigating medical errors. An organization that is ready to focus on teamwork and safety is more likely to benefit from a TeamSTEPPS intervention.

Has your institution clearly assessed the willingness to participate in, the timeliness of, and the readiness for a culture change based upon teamwork and safety?

3. Is now the right time for implementing a culture change (i.e., it will not compete with other major changes currently being made at your institution)?

   If your organization is currently experiencing many changes, it may not be the ideal moment to begin implementing the TeamSTEPPS initiative. Attempting to manage multiple change efforts at one time may degrade your institution's ability and employees' willingness to implement and sustain the TeamSTEPPS effort. The program may be viewed as a distraction rather than a solution.

4. Is a culture change that emphasizes the importance of teamwork and safety feasible and acceptable?

   The goal of TeamSTEPPS is to provide the safest and highest quality health care. This involves optimizing a complicated delivery system of people and processes and requires change, including recognizing the need for change, developing a culture that will accept change, and fostering change in individuals' approaches to the health care delivery process. This change may involve giving people freedom and discretion, encouraging risk-taking and speaking up, giving permission to find team-driven solutions. Your institution must be willing to change its culture and processes to enhance teamwork and safety.

5. Will your institution's leaders support culture change and the effort required to implement and sustain the TeamSTEPPS initiative?

   It is essential that the leaders of your institution actively support and champion TeamSTEPPS. Leaders needs to understand the requirements of the program (e.g., trainer preparation and training, ongoing coaching, weekly team meetings to reinforce concepts) and be willing to provide the personnel, time, and resources required to successfully implement and sustain the program. In addition, it is important for leaders to understand their role in sponsoring, evaluating, enabling, or modifying the behaviors necessary to shape and maintain the targeted safety or teamwork behavior changes.

Is your institution willing to allocate the necessary time, resources, and personnel to implement and sustain the TeamSTEPPS initiative?

6. Will your institution provide sufficient staff with the necessary characteristics and attitudes to serve as instructors?

   It is important to find individuals with the right characteristics to serve as trainers to increase the success of the TeamSTEPPS initiative. Instructors should be:

   • Viewed as advocates of teamwork and models for implementing teamwork actions during day-to-day operations.

   • Dynamic presenters.

   • Viewed by peers and administrators as leaders who are highly respected and able to influence others.

   • In positions that allow flexibility in scheduling.

   • Highly visible, accessible, and available for teamwork coaching throughout the change effort.

7. Will your institution provide sufficient staff with the necessary characteristics and attitudes to serve as coaches?

    Given that this is a culture change effort, the TeamSTEPPS initiative extends beyond classroom teaching and calls for coaches to reinforce, monitor, and role model teamwork principles in everyday practice. It is important to select individuals with the right characteristics to serve as coaches to increase the likelihood of their success and others' receptiveness to their coaching. For coaching to be effective, one coach is needed for every 10 staff members.

    Coaches should:

    - Be effective at developing the teamwork skills of others.

    - Be able to effect changes in work patterns, behaviors, and the environment.

    - Be highly respected with sufficient informal or formal power.

    - Have an interpersonal style conducive to coaching (e.g., demonstrate a supportive attitude and ability to build confidence in others).

    - Be able to provide effective feedback that is descriptive, problem oriented, empowering, exploring, and considerate.

8. Will your institution allow time to prepare instructors and coaches for their roles?

    TeamSTEPPS offers a 2.5-day train-the-trainer course to educate instructors and coaches in content fundamentals and the knowledge and training to implement and coach the desired behaviors to achieve results.

9. Will your institution allow time for personnel to attend training?

    Regardless of your institution's plan for implementing TeamSTEPPS, some direct staff training will be required. The full training element of the program includes up to 6 hours of classroom learning; however, your institution may decide to train only one segment (e.g., a specific tool or strategy) that may require 1 hour. To preclude disruptions and scheduling problems and to maximize learning, participants should be excused from all duties while attending class.

10. Will your institution allow time for instructors to potentially customize the course?

    TeamSTEPPS provides flexibility in how it is implemented. An institution may determine that it is best to select just one tool and implement that segment of the training and the necessary follow-up coaching to ensure teams learn and continue to use the tool to enhance teamwork and safety. Segments also include supplemental and interchangeable content and examples that may be used to customize the program. In addition, institutions may choose to have their own content and examples included. Each of these options requires trainers to commit some time to customize the content.

Has your institution clearly defined the systems and measures needed for sustaining continuous improvement of processes and fostering positive teamwork behaviors?

11. Will your institution be willing to measure and assess progress and continuously improve processes?

For continued success, the organization needs to view the culture change as a process rather than an event. It is important that your institution continually measure the ongoing effectiveness of the TeamSTEPPS intervention. This enables the institution to know whether the intervention is successful and to publicize that success to gain additional staff buy-in or to make changes to the program. In addition, part of the process is to identify further opportunities for patient safety and quality improvement. Once these opportunities have been identified, the organization needs to be willing to implement changes to address the opportunities.

12. Will your institution be able to reinforce and reward positive teamwork behaviors and improvements in processes?

To become accepted practice, positive teamwork behaviors and improvements in processes and outcomes need to be reinforced and rewarded. Leaders, champions, instructors, and coaches should be willing to provide ongoing feedback to others within the institution. Successes need to be formally recognized and showcased throughout the organization. These activities help maintain the momentum needed to sustain a culture of safety and teamwork.

Organizational Readiness Assessment Checklist

Record your responses to the questions below:

Question	Response
Defined Need	
1. Have you clearly defined the need that is driving your institution to consider implementing TeamSTEPPS?	☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Is building a stronger teamwork and safety culture an appropriate strategy to address your institution's need?	☐ YES ☐ NO
Readiness for Change in Culture	
3. Is now the right time for implementing a culture change (i.e., it will not compete with other major changes currently being made at your institution)?	☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Is a culture change that emphasizes the importance of teamwork and safety feasible and acceptable?	☐ YES ☐ NO
5. Will your institution's leaders support culture change and the effort required to implement and sustain the TeamSTEPPS initiative?	☐ YES ☐ NO
Time, Resources, Personnel	
6. Will your institution provide sufficient staff with the necessary characteristics and attitudes to serve as instructors?	☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Will your institution provide sufficient staff with the necessary characteristics and attitudes to serve as coaches?	☐ YES ☐ NO
8. Will your institution allow time to prepare the instructors and coaches for their role?	☐ YES ☐ NO
9. Will your institution allow time for personnel to attend training?	☐ YES ☐ NO
10. Will your institution allow time for instructors to potentially customize the course?	☐ YES ☐ NO
Sustainment of the Change	
11. Will your institution be willing to measure and assess progress and continuously improve processes??	☐ YES ☐ NO
12. Will your institution be able to reinforce and reward positive teamwork behaviors and improvements in processes?	☐ YES ☐ NO

Count the number of NO responses that you've recorded. If the number is:

0–3: This is likely to be a good time to implement TeamSTEPPS within your institution. As you begin the implementation process, make sure you continue to monitor whether the answers to these questions change and keep a close eye on any items to which you answered "no."

4–6:   Your responses indicate that your institution may not be ready on one-third to one-half of the factors. This reduces the likelihood that the program will be successful. Take some time to determine if this is the appropriate time to implement TeamSTEPPS™. Review the tips and suggestions to enhance readiness that follow and determine if any are appropriate within your institution.

7–10:   Based on your responses, significant work is likely needed to raise the readiness level of your institution. Implementing TeamSTEPPS at this time could engender significant risk that it will not succeed or produce the desired results. Consider postponing the implementation process for a few months, and then answer the questions again to determine if any of the factors have changed. Also, review the tips and suggestions that follow for ways to enhance your institution's readiness.

Tips and Suggestions for Enhancing Organizational Readiness

Below are some tips and suggestions for actions you can take to help assess and enhance the readiness of your institution to implement TeamSTEPPS.

- Use assessment tools to further assess readiness and clarify needs. Examples include the AHRQ Patient Safety Culture Survey, surveys of patient and staff satisfaction, unit- or site-specific process and outcome measures (patient flow, hospital acquired infection rates, preventable deaths). Gather data that will provide a baseline of the organization's current status and can be used to develop a business case or leader briefings.

- Conduct a briefing for senior leaders and key stakeholders about the TeamSTEPPS program, including its purpose and goals, what's required from an organizational perspective, and what's required of them to make the initiative a success. Be sure they are aware of what will be needed for your organization to gain the benefits from TeamSTEPPS and allow them to make an informed decision. Reinforce the concept that TeamSTEPPS is more than just a training program. It's an ongoing effort to enhance teamwork. This will reduce the likelihood of a "false start," where the training is conducted but no actions are taken to ensure the behaviors become incorporated into everyday actions.

- Gather information regarding the need within your institution and assemble a business case that you can present in support of initiating TeamSTEPPS. Identify who will receive the business case presentation (e.g., senior leaders), what you need from them (e.g., decisions, support for the program, resources), and the type of information that will mean the most to them and that they will rely on to inform their decisions (e.g., evidence-based research, hospital safety statistics, success stories). Present a compelling rationale for why the change effort is necessary (e.g., the problem that it will solve) and the benefits that will potentially be obtained. A report from The Conference Board in 2005 suggested that a lack of urgency and unclear rationale are two of the most common derailers of change efforts. If there really isn't a clear, compelling rationale, it is best to determine that up front and postpone the effort.

- Identify all the changes that are currently occurring within the organization, determine who the changes are impacting (e.g., specific units), and create a timeline of the progress of each change effort. Based on this timeline, identify a good time to implement TeamSTEPPS for a

specific unit. Ideally, start with a group that has a need and the capacity to handle the change effort. Postpone the start, if necessary, until another major change has been completed if it is organization wide. Sometimes delaying the start for a few months can make a big difference. Having too many changes underway that exceed peoples' change capacity is a common reason why change efforts fail. In some cases you may be able to work with leaders to identify whether any of the other change efforts are unnecessary, freeing capacity for TeamSTEPPS.

- Identify units that are prime candidates for TeamSTEPPS by applying the following matrix. First, identify the capacity of various units to handle the change as well as their level of readiness. Then determine the level of teamwork required within the units. Use this information to determine a rollout plan or sequence within the institution. Units that are both ready and require great teamwork are logical candidates for an early launch.

	Less Capacity/Readiness	Greater Capacity/Readiness
High Need for Teamwork	Careful about timing (postpone)	Prime candidate
Low Need for Teamwork	Do not proceed	Less urgency

- For any effort, especially if the institution is not at a high level of readiness, consider starting small rather than launching an organization-wide effort.

  – Gather leadership support and buy-in for a targeted effort.

  – Select a specific unit, considering both its readiness and need for enhanced teamwork. The selected unit should neither be the easiest nor the most difficult one to start with.

  – Identify champions and change agents from both physician and nurse areas within the unit. Make sure they clearly understand the rationale for the effort and their roles.

  – Identify a problem the unit has that it wants or needs to fix. (What keeps you up at night? What can we fix?) Focusing on a problem the unit wants to address can help keep it motivated.

  – Select a specific TeamSTEPPS tool or process that best addresses the problem and can be most effective for that unit. Look for tools or processes that fit into the unit's current processes.

  – Provide the unit training on teamwork and how to use the tool or process.

  – Reinforce the use of the tool or process through ongoing coaching and leadership support and recognition.

  – Measure how the tool or process is being used and how the problem is being addressed. Capture successes and recognize when adjustments are needed.

- – Identify and apply lessons learned from this unit to begin the process with another unit.

- – Discuss additional opportunities for this unit

- Try to identify champions from both the physician and nurse areas. Champions help support the effort, encourage others, and maintain energy. Both physician and nursing champions are important, but without a physician champion, the effort is less likely to succeed.

- Involve key influencers in the process. These can be leaders, but they can also be staff. Which individuals tend to have the greatest influence on other team members? Who do team members look to when deciding if something is useful or a waste of time? Ideally, you'd like them to be champions, but even if they aren't champions at the beginning of the effort, try to find ways to involve them in decisions (e.g., which problems to address, which tools to use). Research has shown that participation in change efforts is related to subsequent success (Lines, 2004).

- Identify current safety and quality initiatives (e.g., Lean Six Sigma) that may be occurring within the institution, and identify how TeamSTEPPS can fit with or reinforce those efforts. What is the purpose of those efforts and how might a TeamSTEPPS tool or process support that purpose? This ties the new team behaviors to an existing initiative. Identify measures that are being used for the safety and quality initiatives and determine whether any can be linked to TeamSTEPPS. One caveat: Avoid linking TeamSTEPPS with an extremely unpopular or unsuccessful effort.

- Identify ways that the TeamSTEPPS behaviors can be incorporated into existing work processes within the organization or unit. For example, TeamSTEPPS behaviors can be used during normally occurring handoffs to enhance information sharing and patient safety. Connecting TeamSTEPPS to regular work processes and requirements can make better teamwork part of doing the job rather than an unrelated or academic concept.

- Seek behavioral commitments from leaders. Ask them to help launch the effort, agree to followup on progress, reinforce key behaviors, and exhibit the behaviors themselves. Sometimes leaders don't sponsor efforts effectively because they don't know what they need to do. Coaching them can help them be better sponsors. A study of change efforts in 225 organizational change efforts showed that leader commitment is closely related to organizational success (Sirkin et al, 2005).

Emphasize the ongoing effort required to reinforce the TeamSTEPPS tools or processes over time. This includes the need for team meetings, huddles, and debriefs to discuss and reinforce the learned concepts and the need for coaches to provide team or one-on-one feedback regarding the use of the tools or processes. More learning occurs on the job than in classrooms (Tannenbaum, 1997), so coaches and supervisors are a key factor in ensuring ongoing learning and reinforcement of training (Tracey et al, 1995).

References

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