

Step 2.1 – Select Team

Select Facilitator and Team Members

Introduction

The primary purpose of root cause analysis (RCA) is to prevent future occurrences of a similar event. RCA is always conducted by a team. This team identifies the root cause(s) of a single event and identifies, implements, and evaluates interventions or actions, to prevent the event from happening again. The team is disbanded once the root cause and interventions are completed. Team members should include staff with direct knowledge of the processes being investigated. Having staff with direct care responsibilities on the team is helpful because they offer the most insight into why the event occurred and what actually happened. Having staff with direct care responsibilities involved, also shifts the focus away from them and finding “who’s responsible” to the system perspective of the underlying root cause.

How to Use

Use these ideas to define roles and choose the facilitator and team members for the RCA.

Identify a Facilitator

It is recommended that an internal person be designated as the facilitator. This assures the quality improvement process is internally motivated and led by someone engaged in the process. Having an external person facilitate can lead to staff resentment, lack of trust, and lack of engagement. The facilitator should have an understanding and skills in quality improvement processes, systems thinking, RCA purpose, process, and outcomes. The facilitator is usually chosen by the administrator or other key administrative staff. The administrator can be the facilitator, but that is not required. The facilitator and key administrative staff usually determine who should be on the team.

The Facilitator

- Should not be directly involved in the incident
- Often is someone in a leadership position
- Should be someone with credibility with the team
- Begins to gather facts
- Is involved with interviewing the participants and other witnesses to the event
- Should be able to stay neutral about the event, showing no bias or pre-determined opinions about the event
- Should have no preconceived ideas of causal factors of the event
- Should know the organizational history of processes
- Should have quality improvement knowledge and skills

Identify a Team

Teams should have sufficient members to allow for a broad perspective. This assures that aspects of the investigation will not be overlooked. Too many members make it difficult to find convenient times for everyone to participate and attend the meetings. Too few members does not provide a broad enough perspective. Four to eight members works for most teams. All team members should attend all team meetings.

The Team

- Should include persons most knowledgeable in the process being investigated.
- Should include interdisciplinary representation. It is often helpful to have someone outside the process to ask clarifying questions, such as, “Why is it done that way?” or “Can it be done differently?” They can bring a fresh perspective to the process.
- May or may not include staff directly involved in the event. It’s expected that these staff will be interviewed about the event. However, if staff feel emotionally involved or stressed due to the nature of the event, they should not participate in the RCA. If not participating in the RCA, involved staff should be informed of the process and the outcome.
- Can include residents and family members. This depends on the nature of the event. Care must be taken to assure that confidentiality and health information (PHI) are protected. The perspective of residents and family members is very beneficial. If the event has impact on the care experiences of the persons living in your home, you need resident and family perspectives to assure a person-centered approach. If they cannot be included in the RCA, their feedback can be included during intervention planning and implementation.
- Can include physicians or other providers.
- Administrative staff are not required to be on the team, but should always be available for support.
- If the administrator is not part of the team, he or she should be involved in early discussion and in action planning stages.

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