



## **AHRQ Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture Tool**

Patient safety is a critical area of focus for hospitals. Hospitals, along with the government, insurers, regulators and consumers, are holding themselves accountable to provide safe care and eliminate harm to patients. Healthcare organizations must develop a culture of safety such that the organization's care processes and staff are focused on eliminating harm to patients and improving the safety of care for patients.

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has developed the Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture that helps hospitals and health care systems assess an organization's culture of patient safety. The survey tool can be used to assess the safety culture of a hospital as a whole, or for specific units within hospitals, as well as to track changes in patient safety culture over time and evaluate the impact of patient safety interventions.

The Tennessee Center for Patient Safety (TCPS) has a web-based version of the AHRQ survey that is both easy to setup and take.

The survey has the following features and capabilities:

- Offers a secure interface with its own login screen, administration page and survey page
- Survey takers maintain anonymity
- Summary tables and graphs that compare your hospital's aggregate item-level and composite results to a comparison group of your choice such as all Tennessee hospitals, bed-size peer groups, or the United States
- Quality data checks where applicable, such as out of range values
- Checks for completeness of survey to determine if survey form can be used in report
- Additional questions, such as background items to reflect respondent's unit, staff level, etc.

# Frequently Asked Questions: Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture

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These frequently asked questions address issues related to the Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture.

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## Question 1: Why should a hospital conduct a safety culture survey?

**Answer:** Safety culture surveys are useful for measuring organizational conditions that can lead to adverse events and patient harm in healthcare organizations. Organizations that want to assess their existing culture of patient safety should consider conducting a safety culture survey. Safety culture surveys can be used to:

- Raise awareness about patient safety issues.
- Fulfill directives or regulatory requirements.
- Diagnose the current status of safety culture.
- Evaluate specific patient safety interventions or programs.
- Conduct internal and external benchmarking.
- Track change over time.

## Question 2: There are other organizational culture and patient safety surveys; why should a hospital use the AHRQ survey?

**Answer:** There are several advantages of the survey. It is:

1. **Free.** The survey was developed by AHRQ and is available free of charge.
2. **A hospital-wide instrument.** The survey was designed to be administered to all types of hospital staff, including clinical and non-clinical. It can be used to assess individual hospital units or departments, or it can be administered hospital-wide.
3. **Reliable and valid.** The survey development process was careful and rigorous, based on a review of the existing research and other culture surveys. More importantly, the survey items have demonstrated reliability and validity.
4. **Comprehensive and specific.** The survey covers over a dozen areas of patient safety, providing a level of detail that helps hospitals identify specific areas of strength and areas for improvement at both the unit-level and hospital level.
5. **Easy to use.** The survey has an accompanying Toolkit which contains the following support tools:
  - **A Survey User's Guide:** Gives step-by-step instructions on how to select a sample, administer the survey and obtain high response rates, and how to analyze and report results.

- **A template to display survey results:** A Powerpoint presentation template is included that can be customized to display survey results to administrators and staff throughout the hospital.

### **Question 3: What areas of patient safety do the survey questions cover?**

**Answer:** The survey measures staff perceptions of patient safety in their work area/unit, as well as perceptions about patient safety in the hospital as a whole. The following 12 areas of patient safety are included, with each area measured by 3 or 4 survey questions:

#### **Unit-level Safety Areas Covered**

1. Overall perceptions of safety.
2. Frequency of events reported.
3. Supervisor/manager expectations & actions promoting patient safety.
4. Organizational learning-continuous improvement.
5. Teamwork within units.
6. Communication openness.
7. Feedback & communication about error.
8. Nonpunitive response to error.
9. Staffing.

#### **Hospital-wide Safety Areas Covered**

10. Hospital management support for patient safety.
11. Teamwork across hospital units.
12. Hospital handoffs & transitions.

There are also two other questions that ask about:

- The patient safety "grade" the respondent would assign their work area/unit.
- The number of events the respondent has reported in last 12 months.

### **Question 4: How long is the survey?**

**Answer:** There are a total of 51 items in the survey and it takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Most of the items use Agree/Disagree or Never/Always response categories so it is easy to answer. There is room for written comments at the end of the survey.

### **Question 5: Can hospital systems that include ambulatory/outpatient facilities also use this survey?**

**Answer:** Yes. The areas of patient safety covered are relevant to both outpatient and inpatient facilities.

**Question 6: Can I benchmark or compare my hospital's survey results against other hospitals?**

**Answer:** Yes, your survey results will be benchmarked against National results as well as Tennessee hospitals.

**Question 7: Can I modify the survey or do I need to use it as is?**

**Answer:** To benchmark or compare your hospital's results against other hospitals, you should not modify the survey, because any changes may affect the reliability and overall validity of the survey, and may make comparisons with other hospitals difficult.

**Question 8: Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

**Answer:** You may send E-mail to [dswart@tha.com](mailto:dswart@tha.com) or [llee@tha.com](mailto:llee@tha.com). You may also reach us by phone: Darlene Swart 615-401-7460 or Larissa Lee 615-401-7464.

For more details, refer to the survey Toolkit materials available on the AHRQ Web site at <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/hospculture/>.