

Soteria Strains

Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program Guide

Section 1 - Setting the Stage

Section 1.1 - Commitment of Leaders

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STRAINS

A provincial strategy for healthcare workplace musculoskeletal injury prevention.

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Section 1.1 – Commitment of Leaders

Introduction

The success of any program depends on the commitment and leadership of everyone in the workplace. This is especially true for a safe patient handling and mobility program, which has multiple components and requires significant organizational and personal change to succeed.

Leadership can be defined as the process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal. Leaders who provide their team with a definite sense of direction and purpose tend to have more satisfied and committed employees. Successful leaders are constantly reinforcing where the organization is heading and the key steps that lead to success. Employees need to see how their hard work makes a difference, and how it helps get the organization closer to achieving success.

Commitment can be defined as the dedication to taking action in order to achieve a desired result. It is not just about saying the right things but the dedication to engaging in the necessary behaviours or actions to bring about the desired results. For leaders, this means, they set an example for others to follow. Leaders create cynicism and lose trust when they say one thing and do another. Research demonstrates that employees are more likely to change their own behaviours if they see that management is not only talking about making the changes but implementing them in their own practices as well.

Commitment of leaders is essential in any significant organizational change, such as implementing a safe patient handling and mobility program. Leaders committed to the safe patient handling and mobility program should¹:

- **Speak:** Leaders must reinforce the importance of safe patient handling and mobility and take every opportunity to remind others of its importance. Safe patient handling and mobility should be discussed regularly at meetings.
- **Act:** When leaders respond promptly to safe patient handling and mobility issues, when they themselves model safe patient handling and mobility working practices, they send an important message that safety is for everyone. Leaders also need to ensure required resources are allocated to the safe patient handling and mobility program.
- **Focus:** Success takes sustained effort over a long period of time. Leaders must maintain focus on the objectives of the program at all times and in particular at times when safety and delivery of care appear to be in conflict

¹ Adapted from So what do Safety Leaders do? (Wong, Kelloway & Makhan, in press)

- **Engage:** Leaders must show concern for safe patient handling and mobility, but it cannot stop with them. Leaders need to engage health care workers and support staff by asking them for their ideas, discussing their concerns, getting them involved, and helping them to problem solve. Also, leaders should help individuals to answer the question “What’s in it for me?” to promote buy-in and participation
- **Recognize:** Leaders have an important role to provide in recognizing and providing feedback on workplace behaviours. Decades of research has clearly shown the power of this simple act — simply recognizing when employees are following safe patient handling and mobility procedures and providing them feedback improves workplace safety.

Below are examples of specific activities leaders should perform to demonstrate commitment to the Soteria Strains Safe Patient Handling and Mobility Program. Many will happen concurrently. It is important, however, that establishing senior leader commitment receives the highest priority. Actions at this level set the tone for all other components of the program.

How Leaders Demonstrate Commitment

Senior Leaders

Engagement and commitment of senior leaders is a critical component to the success of the safe patient handling and mobility program. Senior leaders should ensure:

- a) Safe patient handling and mobility is discussed at meetings regularly
- b) A written policy is signed (see “Section 1.2 Policy”) outlining the organization’s commitment to the safe patient handling and mobility program.
- c) Roles are defined, responsibilities assigned, accountabilities established, and authority delegated as needed to implement the program
- d) Appropriate financial, human, and other organizational resources are put in place to effectively plan, implement, check, review, and revise the safe patient handling and mobility program
- e) Measurable objectives are set, included in the program evaluation framework, and used to guide program implementation and delivery
- f) A regular review is conducted of the outcome measures provided by the evaluation framework for the safe patient handling and mobility program and ensure steps are taken to address any areas where objectives are not being met. Refer to “Section 1.3 – Evaluation Framework” for further details
- g) The program is established, actively promoted, and sustained
- h) All responsible parties are involved and participating in safe patient handling and mobility program
- i) Frontline health care workers and their representatives are consulted on the implementation and improvement of the safe patient handling and mobility program

Frontline Managers' and Delegates'

Engagement and commitment by frontline leaders is a critical component to the success of the safe patient handling and mobility program. It is important that frontline managers and supervisors understand they bear the day-to-day burden of ensuring regular and continued participation in the program. Frontline leaders should:

- a) Ensure all health care workers are trained in all of the components of the Safe. Patient Handling and Movement Program appropriate to their roles and hazard exposure.
- b) Undertake effective communication of expectations regarding the program and related policies.
- c) Foster participation in the safe patient handling and mobility program.
- d) Create an environment in which feedback is openly provided and received from frontline managers to their delegates as well as from their delegates to frontline managers.
 - Provide feedback to employees on their participation and performance outlined in expectations, to demonstrate support and continuous improvement.
- e) Attend and achieve competency in safe patient handling and mobility program
- f) Actively support the selection and function of Peer Champions (providing time, understanding their role, visible support).

Frontline Workers'

Health care worker participation is a cornerstone of the safe patient handling and mobility program and ensuring workers understand the benefits of the program are essential. Active commitment by frontline workers is demonstrated by:

- a) Participating in the program.
- b) The utilization and awareness of the peer champion program. Peer champions are a resource for health care workers to:
 - a. Communicate concerns specific to the program
 - b. Contribute to improving the program
 - c. Ask questions to and learn by example
- c) Encouraging others to participate.

Union Representatives'

A successful program requires establishing an understanding that reducing harm to workers is mutually beneficial to everyone in the workplace and that unions play a key role in developing and maintaining a collaborative, positive approach to the initiative. Union commitment can be demonstrated by:

- a) Encouraging all members to participate in the program.
- b) Working with the employer to implement and improve the program.
- c) Communicating about and supporting the program.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees'

The joint occupational health and safety committees have an intrinsic commitment to all OH&S initiatives and their participation will help maintain the active involvement of all workplace parties by:

- a) Supporting and monitoring the effectiveness of the program.
- b) Assisting in communicating the importance of the program.
- c) Encouraging all workplace parties to participate.
- d) Acting as a communication conduit between workers, the union, and the employer.