

The case for CARe

COMMUNICATION, APOLOGY AND RESOLUTION (CARe)

Communication, Apology and Resolution (CARe) is a method for responding to adverse events that improves patient safety, reduces costs and enhances fairness and transparency.

HOW IT WORKS

Health care organizations commit to:

1. Providing prompt, empathetic, and transparent communication with patients and families after an adverse event and support for clinicians in disclosing these unexpected outcomes.
2. Reviewing the event and try to determine the causes. They discuss these findings with the patient and family, regardless of whether the event was preventable, and share any plans to prevent similar events from recurring.
3. Offering a sincere apology and working toward resolution together and, if the event was preventable, working with the facility's claims department or malpractice insurer. In some cases, this may include proactive financial compensation.
4. Exploring opportunities for improvement in patient safety, with the goal being to prevent the same thing from happening to other patients.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT CARe WORKS?

CARe is a method of handling adverse events that supports patients and providers after unexpected outcomes. [Patients deserve transparency and honesty](#) when adverse events occur, and not meeting these needs are often significant factors in motivating patients to file lawsuits. Providers also need support to assist them in communicating with their patients after these events, and for their own mental health.

CARe also offers potential cost savings and can reduce claims in institutions that use it. Research in [Michigan](#) and in [Massachusetts](#) has found evidence of reduced malpractice claims and costs when compared against institutions that did not use the approach. The body of evidence is increasing continuously due to rapid uptake of the practice across the nation in over 400 facilities.

The increased transparency that comes with CARe advances patient safety, [improves trust](#) with patients and [better addresses patients' needs after harm](#). This approach also provides an opportunity to address and heal the emotional impact of adverse events on patients, families and health care providers and is a critical part of building a culture of safety in the organization.

HOW DO I START OR REVITALIZE A CARe PROGRAM?

The Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety is a Massachusetts state agency that works to improve the safety of health care in the Commonwealth. It has tools, resources and coaches to help implement and maintain CARe at your organization, at no cost. Please reach out to the Director of CARe Programs, Melinda Van Niel, to get started: Melinda.VanNiel@BetsyLehmanCenterMA.gov