

Information for clinicians

Be a voice for safety:

Feeling safe to speak up is critical in these unprecedented times



Be a voice for safety

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to escalate we are experiencing the introduction of new processes and measures which impact on the delivery of care. As clinicians at the point of care your voice is critical as you have direct experience how these changes impact on your capacity to deliver safe and reliable care.

Speaking up during COVID -19

Your role in speaking up for safety is critical during this time of change and uncertainty. Communication in this rapidly evolving crisis is crucial in raising awareness of emerging issues that have direct impact on your safety and delivery of safe care to our patients.

When to speak up for safety?

If you notice something that you believe is a risk please speak up. Early identification of emerging risks is essential to enable safety in these challenging times.

Some examples of when to speak up include;

When someone is not using proper Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Using PPE during this time is critical and if you notice someone is not using PPE when it is deemed appropriate please discuss this with them in the first instance if you feel comfortable to do so. Escalate to your manager if this is unsuccessful.

Please see attached CEC guidelines around the use of PPEs.

http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/572883/Application-of-PPE-in-Response-to-COVID-19-19-March-2020-V1.4.pdf

Confusion about your role

During these unprecedented times we are seeing a rapid deployment of our frontline health care workforce. If you find yourself in a new and unfamiliar role or have returned to a role you have not done for a while this will take time to adjust to. Please ask for clarification of your role and seek guidance and support for orientation into the role.

Concerns about wellbeing

If you have concerns about your wellbeing sharing this will ensure you get the support you need. You are not alone please speak up as we are all experiencing this crisis together. If you notice changes in others please check in with them and ask if they are ok. It's critical during this period that we normalise our experiences however we are also careful not to minimise them as they may have a significant impact on our wellbeing or on the wellbeing of others around us.

Attached is a link to support services you can access:

<https://benestar.com/news-media/coronavirus-support-and-resources-benehub>

Refer to the Going Home Checklist

<http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/improve-quality/Safety-Fundamentals-for-Teams>

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How to speak up for safety:

Whilst it's vital that you feel safe to speak up it is not always easy to do. We recognise that speaking up is challenging in the midst of a crisis where there are often competing priorities being managed simultaneously.

Some examples of how we can speak up include;

Self-Awareness

In a period of with mounting professional and personal challenges we can be quite overwhelmed with heightened anxiety and fears. Take the time to pause and reflect to allow for greater awareness of yourself and what is happening for you. This will enhance your ability to communicate effectively.

See useful tips on improving self-awareness are in the following CEC factsheet link:

[FACE COVID: Make a difference to your wellbeing](#)

Recognise and respond

When new information arrives we might have significant reactions to this. Recognise how you feel and do not act on this straight away. Try and seek further clarity if needed. Avoid reacting or blaming and separate the issues from the individuals involved. Plan a response which focuses on your concerns and the impact it has on you or on your capacity to deliver safe and reliable patient care. Use 'I' statements instead of 'You' statements. If you are deployed in a new role identify the appropriate local escalation pathways if needed.

Assertiveness techniques

Our communication skills are important during periods of stress where emotions can often take over. Being assertive is crucial to allow us to communicate clearly what our concerns are and what we want to change. There are a variety of techniques that are available to enhance our assertiveness and ability to effectively communicate for safety.

Attached are some tips on assertiveness from our CEC brief bites series that you may find useful:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI_tUZb1dHc

Further information about Teamwork and Communication

Safety Fundamentals for Teams

<http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/improve-quality/Safety-Fundamentals-for-Teams>