

# Information for NSW Health staff

## Healthcare Safety Culture framework

### Why do we need a Healthcare Safety Culture framework?

A resilient and reliable Healthcare Safety Culture is one where safety is everyone's responsibility and compassionate behaviours are evident at all levels of the system.

The purpose of this framework is to promote a shared mental model of the interconnected components of Healthcare Safety Culture and highlight the importance of compassionate leadership as an enabler.

This framework will support and connect the work we do across NSW Health to promote a psychologically safe work environment for our staff and improved outcomes and experiences for patients, families and carers.

### The components of the Safety Culture framework

**Restorative:** We aim to repair trust and build relationships that may be damaged when errors occur. We support all parties to discuss how they have been affected and decide collaboratively on actions to repair the harm and improve the system for safer care

**Just:** People are always treated fairly and without blame, including when errors occur

**Learning:** We learn from what is working well. We also learn from what goes wrong and continuously make appropriate improvements

**High trust:** High trust relationships form the foundation for openness, learning, and reporting to occur in a psychologically safe environment

**Reporting:** People feel safe to report safety and quality problems with the confidence they will be heard and considered

**Adaptive:** Managers, teams and individuals respond to and adapt appropriately to changing conditions, particularly after an incident or error

**Informed:** We collect, analyse, and learn about our performance and impact from a range of data and use this to inform best practice in a timely manner



Figure 1: CEC Healthcare Safety Culture Framework

**A Safety Culture recognises the inextricable link between the experiences of staff and the experiences of patients, their families and carers.**

# Information for NSW Health staff

## Healthcare Safety Culture framework

### Why do we talk about Compassionate Leadership in a safety culture framework?

Compassionate leadership is respectful, inclusive and distributed across the whole care system, from patients, clinical and support staff, to management and boards. We all play a part in leading with compassion by focusing on relationships through listening to, understanding, empathising with, and supporting people to feel respected and valued, so that we can all realise our full potential. Compassionate leadership behaviours enable a safety culture.

### What do we mean by compassion?

Compassion is both a feeling and an action. It is defined as **feeling empathy + being willing to act** to alleviate suffering as much as we are able. Compassion is not about feeling responsible for fixing everything for others.

### What are the outcomes of compassionate leadership?

- A safer work environment
- Lowers risk of burnout and promotes resilience and well-being for staff
- Improves clinical outcomes for patients
- Supports organisational financial sustainability

#### Where can I find more information?

Further online information is available at:

<https://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au>

#### References:

[What is Compassionate Leadership?](#)

[Safety Culture: Learning from Best Practice](#)

[From Safety-I to Safety-II: A White Paper](#)

### 7 Behaviours of Compassionate Leaders

1. **Contemplative** Take time to pause and deeply reflect, emerging wiser and more self-compassionate.
2. **Curious** Listen to learn and understand.
3. **Confident** Create connected, caring workplaces that enable tough decisions to be made when necessary.
4. **Compassionate** Take thoughtful and intelligent action to support individuals and teams.
5. **Collaborative** Empower all stakeholders to use their strengths and be leaders.
6. **Civil** Value and explore conflicting opinions rather than imposing their own.
7. **Courageous** Courage to listen to tough messages, understand the challenges people face and act to alleviate suffering where possible.



Figure 2: 7 Behaviours of Compassionate Leaders