

Effective Communication Between Doctors and Advanced Practice Providers

Communication has always been a critical aspect of providing high-quality, safe healthcare. With the increasing emphasis on collaborative care, communicating effectively is an even higher priority. Doctors and advanced practice providers (APPs) are both crucial members of the team-based approach to care, and their working relationships often require close collaboration and coordination. Thus, successful communication among these providers is vital to ensure patient safety and reduce the risk of errors.

The following checklist can help healthcare organizations evaluate doctor–APP interactions, assess communication strategies, and potentially identify areas for improvement.

	Yes	No
Does your organization have a code of conduct that establishes expectations for professionalism, respect, and dignity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the code of conduct specify that all communications between providers should be respectful and courteous?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization support a culture of safety, including psychological safety , in which all members of patient care teams are encouraged to speak up about potential safety issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do supervising doctors provide APPs with feedback that is constructive, specific, and actionable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do supervising doctors provide APPs with feedback in a reasonable timeframe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the method of communication tailored to, and appropriate for, the context of the situation? (For example, a complex case may require an in-person or telephone consultation rather than an email or text exchange.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Yes	No
Do doctors make an effort to ensure that APPs fully understand instructions? For example, are APPs encouraged to clarify key information or asked to describe instructions in their own words?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are APPs encouraged to ask questions and seek input from their supervising doctors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are APPs given adequate consultation time with, and reliable contact information for, their supervising doctors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are APPs included in discussions about how to better assess, coordinate, and provide care — and are they encouraged to provide input and suggestions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have well-defined communication policies, including standards for written and verbal communication and protocols for specific scenarios, such as patient handoffs ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization have a well-defined chain-of-command protocol to ensure that members of care teams can quickly escalate concerns if they have difficulty reaching a provider or if a conflict occurs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are doctors and APPs asked to provide feedback about your organization's communication processes and help identify solutions to communication issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does your organization support training and techniques to improve communication skills and team-based care, such as the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's TeamSTEPPS® program , the situation–background–assessment–recommendation (SBAR) technique , the Comprehensive Unit-based Safety Program (CUSP) toolkit , and the I-PASS tool ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Resource

For more information about various topics related to advanced practice providers — such as communication, scope of practice, supervision, and credentialing — see MedPro's [Risk Resources: Advanced Practice Providers](#).

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