

## Patient Safety Culture Surveys

**HB 319 - Rep. Michael Grant**  
**SB 1194 – Sen. Doug Broxson**

### FHA Position

The Florida Hospital Association (FHA) supports the principle of transparency regarding hospital safety. Employee surveys of patient-safety culture are the wrong tool for providing such information. Therefore, FHA opposes any use of patient-safety culture surveys for this purpose.

FHA supports the principle of transparency regarding hospital safety. Employee surveys of patient-safety culture are the wrong tool for providing such information. Therefore, FHA opposes any use of patient-safety culture surveys for this purpose.

### Background

Developing a culture of safety is a core element of hospital efforts to improve patient safety and clinical performance. Safety culture is defined as the product of individual and group beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behavior that determine the organization's commitment to quality and patient safety according to the Joint Commission. Studies demonstrate that a culture of safety improves clinical outcomes and reduces adverse events and mortality. The National Patient Safety Foundation has designated a culture of safety as a safe practice and accreditation bodies, specifically the Joint Commission, require hospitals to measure the culture of safety within the organization.

Hospitals use safety-culture surveys to measure employee perceptions about the organizational culture. Hospital clinicians and staff are asked about aspects of their team, communication, safety hazards, transparency, teamwork and leadership. Surveys are conducted periodically to assess progress and identify and prioritize opportunities to improve. The Agency for Healthcare Quality (ARHQ) recommends that hospitals conduct individually confidential surveys to promote staff participation and encourage frank, honest and robust response.

### Issue

Employees provide their answers voluntarily because the surveys are confidential and anonymous. If employee responses become public information, the information derived from patient-safety culture surveys will diminish and lose its value for purposes of improving care.

Safety-culture surveys are a valuable tool for health care organizations to assess the attitudes and beliefs of their clinicians and staff and adopt action plans to identify opportunities for improvement. Those hospitals using the AHRQ Hospital Survey on Patient Safety Culture have access to nationwide benchmarks for each of the metrics to allow hospitals to compare their safety culture to national averages. Staff participation in the survey is confidential and voluntary. This ensures honest responses to nationally validated questions to provide useful insight for hospital leadership. Surveys assess subjective information that is used to continually improve the safety-culture. Public reporting of safety-culture survey information would bias the use of the tool and undermine its intended purpose.

### Proposed Solution

To ensure meaningful information is available to help patients make informed health care decisions, evidenced-based clinical performance data should be publicly reported in lieu of patient-safety culture survey results, which are not a valid or intentional proxy for hospital safety performance.