

# Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations

## Standard 1



FACTSHEET



Health service organisation leaders implement governance systems to set, monitor and improve the performance of the organisation and communicate the importance of the patient experience and quality management to all members of the workforce. Clinicians and other members of the workforce use the governance systems.

Good governance is vital to improving safety and quality of health care services.

Governance refers to the set of relationships and responsibilities established by a health service between its executive, workforce and stakeholders (including consumers). Governance incorporates the set of processes, customs, policy directives, laws and conventions affecting the way an organisation is directed, administered or controlled. It determines how health services are delivered and has a direct impact on the safety and quality of care.

While most health care in Australia is associated with good clinical outcomes, patients do not always receive all the care that is recommended to them and preventable adverse events continue to occur.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, Australian health services have increased their awareness of, and investment in, safety and quality. Health services have developed and implemented policy, educational materials and processes for improvement. These changes have improved the safety and quality of health care for patients but more still needs to be done to ensure all patients are protected from harm and receive the highest possible standard of care.

‘Harm is usually the result of system failures that most often position clinicians to make mistakes’<sup>2</sup>

Projections for total health care spending indicate that financial pressure on the health care system will continue to increase in the future.



### Facts and Figures

It is difficult to determine the costs directly attributed to safety and quality lapses in health care. However, the final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission suggested that adverse events add a cost of around \$2 billion annually to the health budget.<sup>3</sup>

A systematic approach to improve health care has the potential to reduce the rate at which this cost increases and to improve patient outcomes. A systematic approach identifies the people responsible and accountable for action in the health service organisation. It focuses on risk, quality and patient safety.

The aim of this Standard is to create integrated governance systems that maintain and improve the reliability and quality of patient care as well as improving patient outcomes. It provides the framework for safety and quality by outlining the expected governance structures and processes of a safe organisation.

#### In brief, this Standard requires that:

- There is an integrated system of governance that actively manages patient safety and quality risks. The governance system sets out safety and quality policy, procedures and/or protocols and assigns roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for patient safety and quality.
- The clinical workforce is guided by current best practice and uses clinical guidelines that are supported by the best available evidence.
- Managers and the clinical workforce have the right qualifications, skills and approach to provide safe, high-quality health care.
- Patient safety and quality incidents are recognised, reported and analysed, and this information is used to improve safety systems.

- Patient rights are respected and their engagement in their care is supported. Organisational policies reflect the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights* and processes are in place to enable patients to be partners in decisions about their care.

### What is the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights?

Everyone seeking or receiving care in the Australian health system has certain rights regarding the nature of that care. These are described in the *Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights*. The rights included in the Charter relate to access, safety, respect, communication, participation, privacy and comment.

### Resources and Tools

The Commission has the following resources and tools to assist with the implementation of this Standard:

- Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights
- Open Disclosure Standard
- Review by Peers: A guide to professional, clinical and administrative processes.
- Standard for Credentialing and Defining the Scope of Clinical Practice

### Further Information

A full copy of the Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations Standard is contained in the *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards*. It includes the criteria, items and actions required for health services to meet this Standard and is available on the Commission's website at [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au).

### References

1. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. *Windows into Safety and Quality in Health Care 2010*. Sydney: Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2010.
2. Pronovost PJ. Navigating adaptive challenges in quality improvement. *BMJ Quality & Safety* 2011.
3. National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. *A Healthier Future For All Australians: Final Report*. Canberra: NHHRC, 2009.

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