

# Best practices for CARE programs

## COMMUNICATION, APOLOGY AND RESOLUTION (CARE)

The entire CARE process should be based on transparency and respect, aiming to always “do the right thing.”

1. Encourage adverse event reporting of all kinds, and use multiple sources of information to identify adverse events.
2. Provide just-in-time coaching for clinicians to help them communicate with patients about adverse events.
3. Have a rigorous model to assess and investigate adverse events, including a root cause analysis when appropriate.
4. Support providers throughout the process, offering services and keeping them informed about the status of a case. Assigning an internal contact, like a patient safety coordinator or a risk manager to contact the provider at regular intervals, works well.
5. Support patients throughout the process, offering services, keeping them informed about the status of a case, and managing their expectations of the process. Assigning an internal contact, like a patient relations staff member to contact the patient at regular intervals, works well.
6. Have a mechanism for reporting the findings of the investigation to appropriate departments, and a process for developing and implementing recommendations from those findings. Lessons learned should be shared throughout the institution, and across institutions as appropriate.
7. Communicate the relevant findings of the investigation to the patient, and answer any questions they have. If the decision has been made that the standard of care was met or that there was no causation of harm, communicate it clearly while maintaining empathy for their injury. If the decision has been made that the standard of care was not met, communicate the mistakes and solutions to the patient clearly, and apologize.
8. When compensation is warranted, encourage patients or their families to be represented by counsel. Any compensation that is offered should be fair.
9. Resolution should be comprehensive. Resolving a case goes beyond an offer of compensation. It means that there has been open two-way communication with the patient, and that efforts have been made to meet the patient’s medical and psycho-social needs.
10. Consider a variety of ways to engage patients in post-event learning. Often the most important thing to injured patients is being able to help prevent a reoccurrence of the same mistake. Patients may also be interested in educating others about their experience.