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VALUES, INTEGRITY, AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Compliance Series

VALUES, INTEGRITY, AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT



Course Introduction

Course Introduction_1 of 31



An environment that values integrity in customer service and in how staff members are treated results in both patient and employee satisfaction. Incorporating ethical values and integrity into each interaction with other people is key to creating a positive work environment.

This course discusses the ways in which positive values and integrity contribute to the creation of a positive environment in health care settings.

Are you familiar with this?

If you just need a refresher, the Minute Mandatory lesson summarizes the main

points of the course and can be accessed by clicking the Minute Mandatories button at the top of this page.

Expanded Course

Course Learning Objective_2



After completing this course, you should be able to describe how employees work in an environment where integrity is at the core of the service provided.

Patient Care Scenario_3



Mrs. Reeves is a 47-year-old female who has been admitted to the hospital for a bowel resection. She is married and has four children and two grandchildren.

To help you apply the concepts discussed in each lesson, questions about Mrs. Reeves and the care she receives appear throughout this course.

Review of Key Terms_4



Before you begin this course, please review some frequently used terminology:

bribe

Any payment or consideration of value offered to a participant in the health care system to influence a decision on grounds not directly related to business merits.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services responsible for administration of several key federal health care programs. In addition to Medicare (the federal health insurance program for seniors, people with end-stage renal disease, and those with disabilities) and Medicaid (the federal needs-based program), CMS oversees the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA), among other services.

Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)

A federal law that requires hospital emergency departments (EDs) to medically screen every patient who seeks emergency care and to stabilize or transfer those with medical emergencies, regardless of health insurance status or ability to pay.

disruptive behavior

Defined by The Joint Commission as "behavior which may include actions such as verbal outbursts and physical threats, as well as more passive actions such as refusing to perform assigned tasks or quietly exhibiting uncooperative attitudes during routine activities. These behaviors undermine team effectiveness and can compromise the safety of patients."

incentive

Any payment or consideration of value given to physicians or other parties to influence the flow of referrals or business to the facility.

integrity

In a business setting, building trust with customers and coworkers by being honest, ethical, and consistent in what is said and done.

kickback

Any payment or consideration of value offered to influence a decision on grounds not directly related to business merits.

on the job

A worker is considered on the job during all work hours and any extension of work hours (including travel time between workplace locations during work hours, travel time to and from patient locations or clinics, any time period when one can be called in or back to work, and any other travel undertaken on behalf of the health care facility). Additionally, on the job time includes all relief, lunch, or dinner breaks after which the employee returns to normal work activities.

The Joint Commission (TJC)

An independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission accredits and certifies nearly 21,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

values

Beliefs that people have regarding what is important in their lives.

Lesson 1: Values and Integrity

Topic 1: Values and Integrity

Topic 1 Learning Objective_5

After completing this topic, you should be able to discuss the principles associated with creating an environment of integrity.

Integrity_5



Acting with integrity means adhering to a moral or ethical code. In our culture, this code values honesty and promotes trust; those who act with integrity are free of corruption. When working with patients, it is important to build trust by consistently:

- Doing what you say you are going to do
- Being open and honest
- Being clear about what is right and wrong
- Being true to the patients' values
- Being self-aware and reflective

Business Ethics_6



To act ethically is to know what is right and wrong and to do the right thing. Business ethics involve knowing what is right and wrong in the workplace and doing what is right regarding the organization's products, services, and relationships. Attention to business ethics guides workers in how to act.

The culture of business ethics is at the core of all that is done by an organization. Adhering to ethical business practices includes:

- Caring for people
- Providing high-quality customer service
- Acting with integrity
- Using resources wisely
- Educating people

Characteristics of an Ethical Organization_6

According to the *Graziadio Business Report*, ethical organizations are more productive and yield more positive results than organizations that do not use ethics to guide business.

In an ethical organization:

- A clear vision and a commitment to integrity are present throughout the organization
- The organization's vision is owned by all employees
- The organization's policies and practices are aligned with its vision; there are no mixed messages
- Everyone is expected to work through dilemmas

The Joint Commission requires that every health care facility articulate a statement of its values and a plan for putting those values into practice.

Values-Driven Behavior_7



There are certain core values that align with ethical behavior. These values are:

- Wisdom and knowledge: using knowledge to solve problems in an ethical manner
- Self-control: effectively managing reactions to challenging situations and temptations
- Justice: acting fairly with all people
- Transcendence: putting the interest of others above self-interests
- Love and kindness: treating people with compassion
- Courage and integrity: having the strength of character to do the right thing without regard to personal consequences

Building Trust_8



Trust is a key component of using values-driven behavior. To trust someone is to believe that what he or she says or does is true. Trust is a core element of

effective business. Patients must trust that you will do the right thing for them, or they will take their business elsewhere. To build trust in a business setting, you should adhere to the following practices:

- Behave appropriately.
- Follow procedures.
- Report unethical, illegal, or improper actions.
- Do what you say you are going to do.
- Tell the truth.

Equal Employment Opportunities_9



Ethical organizations are committed to equal employment opportunities. These opportunities do not discriminate against actual or potential employees with respect to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, gender, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Nonprofit Versus For-Profit_10



Most health care facilities are nonprofit agencies. Thus, ethical behavior in most health care settings involves following guidelines for nonprofit agencies. Both ethically and legally, funds from nonprofit business units cannot be contributed to:

- Political action committees
- Political organizations for candidates running for elected offices in federal, state, or local campaigns
- Political parties

For-profit subsidiaries may make such contributions or engage in political activity. Individual employees can make personal donations from their own funds to campaigns and candidates.

Ethical Behavior Formula_11



When combined, positive values, actions, and behavioral codes can produce a formula that increases the chance that an organization will demonstrate ethical behavior. Following these principles will increase the chance of positive patient experiences and staff satisfaction.



Topic 2: Disruptive Behavior

Topic 2 Learning Objective_12

After completing this topic, you will be able to identify behaviors that are disruptive to safe patient care.

Disruptive Behavior Defined_12

The Joint Commission, an important standard-setting organization in health care, defines disruptive behavior as "behavior which may include actions such as verbal outbursts and physical threats, as well as more passive actions such as refusing to perform assigned tasks or quietly exhibiting uncooperative attitudes during routine activities. These behaviors undermine team effectiveness and can compromise the safety of patients."

Effect on Patient Care and Safety_12



Disruptive or intimidating behavior by one staff member toward another creates a hostile work environment and an atmosphere where quality patient care is difficult to deliver. These behaviors have been shown to lead to potentially preventable adverse events, errors, compromises in safety and quality, and patient mortality.

Effect on Work Environments_12

Sometimes referred to as "bullying" or "lateral violence," these behaviors damage relationships and diminish critical communication among team members. Intimidating or disruptive behavior constitutes unprofessional behavior and is always unacceptable.

Responding to Disruptive Behavior_13



If you witness (or are the target of) disruptive or intimidating behavior, it is important that you do not ignore it. Intervene at the moment, and ask that the behavior be stopped. You might wish to discuss your observations with your immediate supervisor, a human resource officer, or a higher level manager.

Examples of Disruptive Behavior_13

Below and on the following screens are examples of disruptive statements and how you can respond to both intervene and ask that the behavior stop.

Technician A: "You should be embarrassed to call yourself a technician—you don't know what you are doing."

Technician B: "It seems you and I disagree; however, if you have a suggestion of another way of doing this, I would be happy to discuss it with you."

Nurse A: "I can't believe they sent you to this floor again! I hate it when I have to work with a float nurse!"

Nurse B: "That kind of comment makes it difficult for me to be part of the team. Since I am here tonight, let's make a plan for how we can work together and provide the best patient care possible."

Patient Relations_14



Doctor: "If you tell anyone about the medication error I almost made, you'll be sorry. I know what your car looks like and where you park."

Nurse: "I am sorry, but threatening me is unacceptable."

When threats are made, it is important to seek the help of an immediate supervisor.



Topic 3: Integrity and Daily Practices

Topic 3 Learning Objective_15

After completing this topic, you should be able to discuss how to incorporate the principles of integrity into your daily practices.

Appropriate Behaviors_15



For an organization to have ethical principles, each employee must behave in an ethical manner. Ethically appropriate behaviors include:

- Acknowledging mistakes and offering apologies
- Asking questions until the answers make sense
- Dealing with difficult issues honestly, directly, and respectfully

- Following rules and policies
- Protecting confidential information
- Telling the truth

Inappropriate Behaviors_15

Inappropriate behaviors create a sense of distrust and can lead to unethical procedures. Behaviors that are inappropriate include:

- Disregarding or retaliating against people who challenge existing practices or policies
- Making commitments you cannot keep
- Misrepresenting facts, the facility, or yourself
- Remaining silent when you see inappropriate behavior
- Using your position or corporate resources for personal benefit

Ethical Concerns_16



If you have a concern over an issue, you should evaluate the issue by asking the following questions:

- Does the action support good values, policies, and procedures?
- Is it ethical?
- Is it legal?

Ask questions of others until the answer makes sense to you. If something makes you feel uncomfortable, it may do the same to patients, their families, and the community.

Reporting Ethical Concerns_16

Discuss your ethical concerns with your immediate supervisor. If doing so makes you feel uncomfortable, consider:

- Contacting the compliance officer
- Discussing the matter with a higher level manager or administrator
- Discussing the matter with other company resources, such as a human resources, risk management, or finance officer

Treatment of Other Workers_17



You should treat all workers with respect and appreciate their unique concerns, needs, values, and talents. You should also promote an environment that is free from sexual harassment or any other form of harassment.

Strive to create an environment in which concerns can be raised without fear of retaliation. Promote open communication and sharing of ideas and concerns by being willing to listen without criticizing or demeaning other employees. In an open environment, workers feel that they are listened to and are confident that they will see some action taken based on their suggestions.

Treatment of Patients_17

When meeting the needs of patients, use all available resources, as appropriate, including professional staff, referral and payer sources, etc. Also make use of family members when appropriate. Ensure that only qualified individuals conduct assessments and lead support groups and classes.

Maintain accurate medical records and other documentation as required by the facility, by The Joint Commission, and by the local state board of health.

Do not perform duties outside the accepted standard of care. This may include babysitting, doing laundry, shopping, etc. If a patient has special needs, contact a

social worker.

Behaviors to Avoid_18



The following actions should be avoided because they do not promote an environment of integrity:

- Calling patients after discharge for social reasons
- Providing or receiving gifts
- Providing services after discharge
- Socializing with a patient's family (in a "friendship" relationship that extends beyond medical care)

Alcohol and Other Substances_18



Alcohol, illegal drugs, and controlled substances are not allowed on the job. Legally obtained medications or prescriptions can be used as directed by a medical professional.

The use of illegal drugs or controlled substances while off the job can result in

the presence of drugs in the worker's body while he or she is on duty. This organization reserves the right to ask workers to take drug tests on a random or with-cause basis.

Firearms_18



No worker may possess or transport firearms or other weapons while on facility property, while on the job, or while operating a vehicle for facility business.

Requests for Information_19



If you receive a subpoena or other written request for information involving your work, you should contact the compliance office immediately. Do not respond to the request until guidance from the compliance office is received.

If someone contacts you, stating that he or she is an investigator, do not talk to that person until you contact the compliance officer. If you are cleared to participate in an investigation or survey, do not provide misleading information. Never falsify, hide, or destroy records.

Billing_20



Business units can bill only for services and benefits that are actually contracted for and rendered. The following principles should be followed:

- Use accurate codes and documentation.
- Follow all requirements for state, federal, and commercial payers.
- Provide medical documentation for all services. If a service or procedure is not documented, it is considered not done.
- Collect co-payments as required by payer agreements, contracts, or insurance policies.
- Record financial transactions following the policies and procedures of the facility.
- Report questionable billing practices to your supervisor or the compliance officer.

Privacy_21



You should be aware of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards for privacy and disclosure.

All patient information is confidential. Do not disclose information about any patient to anyone who is not directly involved in the patient's care. This includes business or social acquaintances, family, friends, other customers, relatives, and suppliers.

Conflicts of Interest_22



A conflict of interest exists when a worker's loyalty is divided between workplace responsibilities and outside or personal interests and responsibilities. All conflicts of interest should be disclosed to your supervisor or the compliance officer.

Maintain impartial relations with present and potential vendors, suppliers, and contractors. Avoid doing business with any firm in which you, your family, a close business associate, or a personal friend has a direct or indirect financial interest. (Exceptions can be made only if this interest is disclosed and resolved with your supervisor and the compliance officer.)

Gifts_23

Occasionally, families may want to give gifts to employees to show their gratitude and appreciation. If given, such gifts should be something that can be given to the unit as a whole rather than to an individual employee. Examples include books, food, and minor supplies and equipment. Individual employees should not accept gifts from, or provide gifts to, patients.

Bribes_23



Bribes, kickbacks, and incentives are not allowed. Integrity must begin with you. If you are a participant in anything that is not ethical, the integrity of the entire organization is compromised.

Leadership_24



If you are a leader within your organization, you are to uphold the highest standard in all aspects of your behavior, especially when you are:

- Working hours and shifts that may be flexible
- Interacting with other workers and with patients
- Hiring staff members
- Handling financial issues
- Following the facility's policies and procedures

The workers you supervise will follow the example of your behavior, so you must do what you expect the workers to do, and you must make a conscious effort to hire workers who demonstrate integrity.



Topic 4: Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)

Topic 4 Learning Objective_25

After completing this topic, you should be able to identify the responsibilities of Medicare-participating hospitals related to the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA).

Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)_25



EMTALA is a federal law that requires hospital emergency departments (EDs) to medically screen every patient who seeks emergency care and to stabilize or transfer those with medical emergencies, regardless of health insurance status or ability to pay.

Medical Screening Exams_26



Hospitals must provide a medical screening exam (MSE) when a request is made for examination or treatment for an emergency medical condition (EMC), including active labor, regardless of the individual's ability to pay. MSEs cannot be delayed to inquire about payment or insurance coverage.

Emergency departments are required to post signs notifying patients and visitors of their rights to an MSE and stabilizing treatment.

Emergency department triage is not an MSE.

EMTALA Obligations_27



If an EMC exists, hospitals are required to provide stabilizing treatment and appropriately transfer or admit the individual as an inpatient. If the hospital does not have the capacity to stabilize a patient, or if the patient requests to be transferred, an appropriate transfer to another hospital should be implemented.

If no emergency exists, the EMTALA obligation is over, but other standards apply

(e.g., a patient-physician relationship has been established).

Enforcement of EMTALA_28

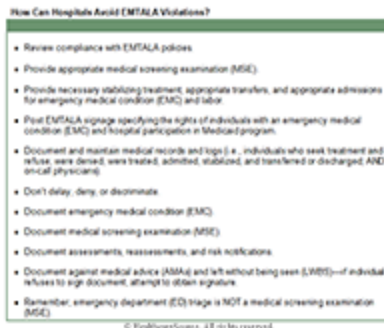
Enforcement of EMTALA is a complaint-driven process. Hospitals are required to report suspected EMTALA violations to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) or the state survey agency within 72 hours of the occurrence. Penalties may include civil money penalties, private lawsuits by patients, or loss of job.

Common EMTALA Citations_28

Common EMTALA citations include:

- Failure to screen appropriately by qualified medical personnel
- Failure to document assessment, risks, and stabilization of both mother and fetus
- Failure to stabilize intoxicated and/or psychiatric patient
- Failure to document

How to Avoid EMTALA Violations_28



There are ways that EMTALA violations can be avoided.

Click on the image to view a list of ways to avoid citations.

How Can Hospitals Avoid EMTALA Violations?

- Review compliance with EMTALA policies.

- Provide appropriate medical screening examination (MSE).
- Provide necessary stabilizing treatment, appropriate transfers, and appropriate admissions for emergency medical condition (EMC) and labor.
- Post EMTALA signage specifying the rights of individuals with an emergency medical condition (EMC) and hospital participation in Medicaid program.
- Document and maintain medical records and logs (i.e., individuals who seek treatment and refuse; were denied; were treated, admitted, stabilized, and transferred or discharged; and on-call physicians).
- Don't delay, deny, or discriminate.
- Document emergency medical condition (EMC).
- Document medical screening examination (MSE).
- Document assessments, reassessments, and risk notifications.
- Document against medical advice (AMAs) and left without being seen (LWBS)—if individual refuses to sign document, attempt to obtain signature.
- Remember, emergency department (ED) triage is NOT a medical screening examination (MSE).

Summary_29



Each patient of GBMC is entitled to receive care in an environment in which positive values and integrity are part of daily practices. The success of incorporating values and integrity into the organization is dependent upon each worker's understanding these principles and then putting them into daily practice.

When such principles exist in everyone's daily practice, patients have a better health care experience that includes trust in their health care providers. Additionally, health care workers find their work environment more satisfying and rewarding.

Obligation to Report

- Always maintain a **questioning attitude**.
- Retaliation for reporting is **NOT** tolerated at GBMC.
- Call us at **1-800-299-7991**. The HOTLINE is open 24/7 and is anonymous.
- Submit an incident report on **Quantros**, where anonymous reporting is also an option.
- Email us at:
 - Compliance@gbmc.org
 - HIPAA@gbmc.org

Next Steps_30



We hope this course has been both informative and helpful. For more information, you may want to consult the sources used to prepare this course. The final screen of the course contains the bibliography.

Click the Test link or button when you are ready to complete the requirements for this course. Upon completion of the test, you can view your test results, which will give you a summary of your performance.

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Minute Mandatories®

Topic 1 Learning Objective_1



After completing this topic, you should be able to define integrity and to explain how acting with integrity leads to patient satisfaction and the creation of a positive work environment. You should also be able to summarize the ethical business practices that you should follow in your daily work routine.

Acting with Integrity in the Health Care Setting_1



Behaving in a manner that is congruent with values and integrity is important because it leads to patient satisfaction and trust. Such behavior includes:

- Being honest
- Matching your actions to the values and goals of your organization
- Doing what you promise to do
- Following the policies and procedures of your facility
- Protecting the confidentiality of the patient
- Reporting any area of concern or conflict of interest to your supervisor or the compliance officer

Behaviors of Integrity_2



Organizations that conduct business with values and integrity incorporate ethical behaviors into daily practice. Some examples of this type of behavior include:

- Acknowledging mistakes and offering apologies
- Asking questions until the answers make sense
- Dealing with difficult issues honestly, directly, and respectfully
- Following rules and policies
- Protecting confidential information
- Telling the truth

Behaviors That Lack Integrity_2

Positive behaviors reinforce ethical practices, and negative behaviors create the opposite reaction. Such negative behaviors include:

- Disregarding or retaliating against people who challenge existing practices or policies
- Making commitments you cannot keep
- Misrepresenting facts, the facility, or yourself
- Remaining silent when you see inappropriate behavior
- Using your position or corporate resources for personal benefit
- Accepting gifts of value from patients
- Visiting the patient socially
- Performing outside services

Disruptive Behaviors_3



Disruptive or intimidating behavior by one staff member toward another creates a hostile work environment and an atmosphere where quality patient care is difficult to deliver. These behaviors have been shown to lead to potentially preventable adverse events, errors, compromises in safety and quality, and patient mortality.

It is in the best interest of patients that staff relationships be of the highest

integrity and professional by nature. Treating others as you would like to be treated is the "right" thing to do and fosters an environment that promotes high-quality care, retention of staff, and a culture of safety.

Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA)_4



EMTALA is a federal law that requires hospital emergency departments to medically screen every patient who seeks emergency care and to stabilize or transfer those with medical emergencies, regardless of health insurance status or ability to pay.

Medical Screening Exams_5



Hospitals must provide a medical screening exam (MSE) when a request is made for examination or treatment for an emergency medical condition (EMC), including active labor, regardless of the individual's ability to pay. MSEs cannot be delayed to inquire about payment or insurance coverage.

Emergency departments are required to post signs notifying patients and visitors of their rights to an MSE and stabilizing treatment.

Emergency department triage is not an MSE.

Enforcement of EMTALA_6



Enforcement of EMTALA is a complaint-driven process. Hospitals are required to report suspected EMTALA violations to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) or the state survey agency within 72 hours of the occurrence. Penalties may include civil money penalties, private lawsuits by patients, or loss of job.

Topic 2 Learning Objective_7



After completing this topic, you should be able to apply knowledge presented in this course to answer questions associated with the patient care scenario.

Patient Care Scenario_7



Mrs. Reeves is a 47-year-old female who has been admitted to the hospital for a bowel resection. She is married and has four children and two grandchildren.

Postdiscussion Review 1_8



Mrs. Reeves asks you to locate some information for her regarding her illness. You tell her that you will, but you become busy and forget.

When you get home from your shift, you remember that you did not provide Mrs. Reeves with the information you promised. Actions that should be taken are:

- Call the unit and talk with Mrs. Reeves's nurse. Ask the nurse to pass a message along to Mrs. Reeves.
- When reporting to work the next day, obtain the information and give it to Mrs. Reeves.
- Apologize to Mrs. Reeves.

Postdiscussion Review 2_8

You witness another health care worker talking to Mrs. Reeves with a raised voice.

The following actions should be taken.

You should ask yourself if the other health care worker's behavior:

- Supports good values, policies, and procedures
- Is ethical
- Is legal

If you decide that the behavior does not meet the goals of ethical behavior, you should:

- Discuss your ethical concerns with your immediate supervisor.
- Contact the compliance officer.
- Discuss the matter with a higher level manager or administrator.
- Discuss the matter with other company resources, such as a human resources, risk management, or finance officer.

Summary_9



Each patient of this facility is entitled to receive care in an environment in which positive values and integrity are part of daily practices. The success of incorporating values and integrity into the organization is dependent upon each worker's understanding these principles and then putting them into daily practice.

When such principles exist in everyone's daily practice, patients have a better health care experience that includes trust in their health care providers. Additionally, health care workers find their work environment more satisfying and rewarding.

Next Steps_9



We hope this course has been both informative and helpful. For more information, you can review the Expanded Course path at the beginning of this course and consult the sources in the bibliography that follows.

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