

## Understanding clear leadership and expectations for a healthy workplace

### After this huddle, staff should be able to:

- **Recognize** how clear expectations contribute to a safe and psychologically healthy workplace.
  - **Identify** workplace factors that support or hinder clear communication between team members.
  - **Apply** strategies to seek clarification when care plans or job expectations feel inconsistent or confusing.
- Before the huddle, review the huddle content and huddle leader notes.
  - Have resources ready, such as policies, employee assistance programs, or SafeCare BC resources.
  - Choose a scenario that fits your workplace and read it aloud.
  - Use the guiding questions to lead the discussion.
  - Use huddle leader notes as support while leading the discussion.
  - Keep the discussion short to about 5-10 minutes.

### How to run the safety huddle

As the huddle leader, do the following:



### Definitions

Clear leadership means that staff know exactly what is expected of them and receive the support they need to do their jobs safely. In a psychologically healthy workplace, leaders communicate effectively and foster an environment where team members feel safe asking questions without being judged. When expectations are clear, it reduces stress and helps everyone provide the best possible care to residents and clients.

## Scenario for long-term care

Amara, a care aide at Willow Creek Care Home, is reviewing a new care plan for Mrs. Chen, who has complex mobility needs. During her morning shift, she sees her colleague Raj using a different transfer method than the one outlined in the new plan. When she asks about it, Raj explains that another staff member told him this approach is faster. The supervisor is covering another unit, and the new process hasn't been reviewed as a team. Amara isn't sure which direction to follow. She hesitates to ask for clarification because she worries it will make her look unprepared, something she's seen others get criticized for. Meanwhile, Mrs. Chen becomes anxious because the care feels inconsistent.



## Guiding questions for long-term care

- How does unclear or inconsistent direction from leaders affect both staff confidence and resident well-being?
- What are the potential consequences for Mrs. Chen when care expectations are not consistent?
- What can leaders do to make it easier for staff to ask questions or confirm expectations before a task?

**Facilitation tip:** Watch for participants who look like they want to speak but are hesitating. Gently invite them to share if they have ever felt “caught in the middle” of different instructions. Focus the talk on how clear processes protect everyone’s well-being.

## Scenario for home care

Elena is a home support worker with a busy schedule of seven client visits today. Her first client is Mr. Silva, who is recovering from a hip replacement. The care plan states she should help with mobility and medication reminders. However, when Elena arrives, Mr. Silva’s family asks her to move heavy patio furniture and wash the second-story windows, claiming the “last worker always did it.” Elena wants to be helpful, but she knows these tasks are outside her role and could be unsafe. She tries to call her supervisor for guidance, but she cannot get through. Elena feels overwhelmed and caught between wanting to please the family and staying within her professional boundaries. Elena hasn't been given clear guidance on what to say when asked to do tasks outside the care plan. She needs to decide how to respond before the family asks her again.



### Guiding questions for home care

- What are the risks to Elena's well-being when she feels unsupported while facing high expectations from a family?
- How can home care workers navigate situations where family expectations go beyond the care plan?
- What tools or technology do we have in our workplace that is the fastest, most reliable escalation method (and is it working)?

**Facilitation tip:** If the conversation turns into a “complaint session” about difficult families, redirect it by asking: “What specific leadership support would make this situation feel less stressful for you?”

### Huddle leader notes

1. Create a safe space:
  - Listen, respect all views, and be mindful of others' challenges.
  - **Guide** the discussion to focus on what participants can control.

- **Move** the conversation from complaints to solutions, strengths, and helpful actions.
  - **Invite** anyone with specific concerns to talk with you after the huddle.
2. Key discussion points: Use the objectives and key discussion points below to guide the huddle if needed.
    - **Consistency is key:** Inconsistent instructions may lead to “responsive behaviours” in residents and “moral distress” in staff.
    - **Psychological safety:** A healthy workplace is one where asking, “I’m not sure, can you show me?” is seen as a professional strength, not a weakness.
    - **Leadership role:** Leaders are responsible for providing clear channels for communication, especially for staff working alone in the community.

### Additional resources

**SafeCare BC** | [CEO leadership blog](#) SafeCare BC's CEO shares reflections, leadership insights, and behind-the-scenes updates on how we're driving change and advocating for safer, healthier workplaces across the sector.

**Workplace Strategies for Mental Health** | [Evidence-based actions for clear leadership and expectations](#)

**Workplace Strategies for Mental Health** | [Strengthening leadership skills](#)

