

SOLUTION: Just Culture

The framework of a just culture ensures balanced accountability for both individuals and the organization responsible for designing and improving systems in the workplace. Engineering principles and human factors analysis influence the design of these systems, so they are safe and reliable.

A **Just Culture** seeks to create an environment that encourages individuals to report mistakes so that the precursors to error can be better understood in order to fix the system issues. ... In a **Just Culture**, individuals are continually learning, designing safe systems, and managing behavioral choices.

Every organization encounters issues, both big and small where a uniform and systematic approach to interpreting the situation would be valuable.

An understanding of the differences in behaviors that humans take when faced with providing safe and high-quality care of patients and their families is essential prior to implementing a Just Culture mindset for your organization.

This is not something that you can “roll out” and presume that change will happen overnight. Just Culture likely will remain on the action plan of a steering team, or HRO committee for 2-3 years.

We recommend AHRQ’s CUSP program to begin learning. We also recommend that there are Just Culture champions, both at the Leader and employee level so that “a champion or expert” can be called upon when questions arise, and when new leaders and employees are hired.

Essentially, a Just Culture is one in which individuals are welcomed to come forward when they believe they have made a mistake, or when they may have made a mistake. This behavior is celebrated, and all learn from the “Good Catch”, and the individual who practiced “Speak Up”. Just Culture has long been used in the aviation industry to take away punitive behaviors when honest human errors and mistake are made and create a blameless work environment where all employees recognize potential environmental, equipment, and human factors that could lead them to make an error that reaches a patient.

A Just Culture is not a BLAME FREE culture. In training, make sure “At Risk” and “Reckless” behaviors are explained, and a variety of examples given so that leaders know how to handle each situation.



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The HRO and Steering Team can use a variety of Solutions from the Framework for Achieving Great Results© to improve a Just Culture environment. Some of these fall in the Leadership Bundle (or Standard Work of Leaders), or they fall within Solutions that all employees can employ in their daily work. Please know that a Just Culture, and striving to reach High Reliability takes everyone, not just those who care for patients each day.

SOME GREAT JUST CULTURE SOLUTIONS, AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF EACH:

Good Catch Program: A Just Culture has incentives for healthy behaviors. A great example of a healthy behavior is to make it very easy for all employees to recognize when a safety issue **could have** happened or was nearly missed. This is commonly referred to as a “Good Catch” and is celebrated for those who report Good Catches. “Good Catches”, or “Near Misses” are often a monitoring metric for a program to test whether or not their Just Culture training is being adopted by front line employees.

Ban the Blame: One of our Positive Communication Standards, Banning Blame, is often assigned to the HRO team to roll out, and train others. This particular Positive Communication Standard works best when each department leader heightens the awareness of “Who do we Blame?” and role models effective non-blaming behavior. Train employees to call each other out when blaming and raise awareness of “We-They” communications (WE **always** do something, and THEY **never** do it right).

*See **Solution for Ban the Blame** for more information.

Behavioral Standards: A Just Culture is all about great safety and excellence in quality behaviors. A Just Culture is one that recognizes that there are levels of human behaviors at play in our patient care and work environments. Defining and providing examples of at risk, and reckless behaviors is a great way to then define GREAT behavior to set standards to. If you already have behavioral standards for safety and quality, have your HRO team sponsor those and elevate them in the work environment.

*See **Solution for Behavior Standards** for more information.

AAAD – Post Event Huddles: People forget what exactly happened in an incident, and thus post event huddles are vital for everyone to learn what factors led to the safety incident.

AAAD stands for:

- **Acknowledge** that a near miss or incident happened
- **Assemble** the right people who are closest to the event
- **Ask WHY?** Preferably 5 times to get at the accurate and true reason for the defect or error
- **Document** on required forms or screens

*See **Solution on Employee Response to Errors, Defects, and Dissatisfaction** for more information.

Performance Management – Compliment, Coach and Correct: Leaders need great words to say to move a Just Culture forward.

*See **Solution on Direct Dialogue**; this provides a template for use when errors or potential errors are found.



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WE RECOMMEND OUR DIRECT DIALOGUE CONVERSATIONS FOR EACH AS BELOW:

Human Error	At-Risk Behavior	Reckless Behavior
<p><i>Product of Our Current System Design and Behavioral Choices</i></p> <p>Manage through changes in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice • Processes • Procedures • Training • Design • Environment 	<p><i>A Choice: Risk Believed Insignificant or Justified</i></p> <p>Manage through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removing incentives for at-risk behaviors • Creating incentives for healthy behaviors • Increasing situational awareness 	<p><i>Conscious Disregard of Substantial and Unjustifiable Risk</i></p> <p>Manage through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remedial action • Punitive action
Console/Coach	Coaching	Correct

RESOURCES:

AHRQ: <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/just-culture-guide>

Just Culture: <https://justculture.com/just-culture-model-for-true-accountability/>



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