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A Strategic Approach for Managing Conflict in Hospitals: Responding to the Joint Commission Leadership Standard, Part 2

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Article-at-a-Glance

Background

A well-designed conflict management process for hospital leaders should both retain the positive benefits of constructive conflict engagement and minimize the adverse consequences that unmanaged conflict can have on patient care. Dispute system design (DSD) experts recommend processes that emphasize the identification of the disputing parties'™ interests and that avoid reliance on exertions of power or resort to rights. In an emerging trend in designing conflict management systems, focus is placed on the relational dynamics among those involved in the conflict, in recognition of the reciprocal impact that each participant in a conflict has on the other. The aim is then to restore trust and heal damaged relationships as a component of resolution.

Components of the Conflict Management Process

The intent of Standard LD.02.04.01 is to prevent escalation to formal legal disputes and encourage leaders to overcome their conflict-avoidance tendencies through the use of well-designed approaches that support engagement with conflict. The sequence of collaborative options consists of individual coaching and counseling; informal face-to-face meetings; informal, internally facilitated meetings; informal, externally facilitated meetings; formal mediation; and postdispute analysis and feedback.

Conclusions

Every hospital has unique needs, and every conflict management process must be tailored to individual circumstances. The recommendations in this two-part article can be adapted and incorporated in other, more comprehensive conflict management processes throughout the hospital. Expanding the conflict competence of leaders to enable them to effectively engage in and model constructive conflict-handling behaviors will further support the strategic goal of providing safe and effective patient care.



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