

Hand-off Communications

Hand-off Communication Tools

AORN is developing a toolkit focusing on “Hand offs” in an effort to look critically at processes to support nurses in providing quality outcomes for patients. To provide members with resources to accomplish that goal, this section will deal with communication tools for the perioperative “hand off.”

Currently, a variety of methods are being used at the clinical interface to support hand-offs during patient care transitions. Some of the existing hand-off tools examined and shared within this toolkit include SBAR, 5 Ps, and I PASS THE BATON.

Initially during the roll-out of a hand-off initiative within a facility, it is not unusual to start with a general tool or verbal hand-off to introduce the concept and “kickstart” the process. This concept is demonstrated through the WakeMed Health and Hospitals SBAR tool and their roll-out campaign slogan: “Speak to me in SBAR.”

Another approach may be the use of standardized written tools adapted to the various settings or practitioners (eg, the Kaiser San Francisco tool for RN-to-RN hand off for the OR-PACU/CVICU, Beth Israel Deaconess Nursing Communication Sheet for ICU-OR, OR-ICU). These tools—often in the form of a checklist—serve to address those unique issues or critical pieces of information related to the continuity of patient care between those specialty areas.

The Department of Defense Patient Safety Program (DoD PSP) developed a comprehensive toolkit titled “Healthcare Communications Toolkit to Improve Transitions in Care.” As part of *TeamSTEPPS*TM, the mnemonic “I PASS THE BATON” was created to structure the critical communication elements that need to be conveyed during a hand-off or patient care transition. *TeamSTEPPS* provides an evidence-based curriculum to facilitate improved communication and other teamwork skills. The DoD has agreed to share this tool, which is included in this section.

A photograph showing two hands, one from the left and one from the right, shaking over a document. The hands are positioned as if in a firm handshake, symbolizing agreement or partnership. The document is held between them, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

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Professional nurses value the lessons inherent in evidence-based practices. The evolution of perioperative practice is achieved through sharing research, knowledge, and resources, and providing feedback. These sample tools are provided for you to adapt for use in your unique clinical setting. We encourage you to use these resources to become a part of the solution.

An ongoing challenge will be implementing hand-off tools within current electronic documentation systems. Opportunities for partnerships with our vendor colleagues will be needed to advance this area.