

Advancing the Agenda for Home Healthcare Quality

Organizational Climate: Implications for the Home Healthcare Workforce Executive Summary

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THE ISSUE

During the 1980s, health care underwent unprecedented industry-wide organizational change with the introduction of managed care. This national health care reorganization included initiatives aimed at reducing length of hospital stay and introducing capitated payment arrangements. Wide variation in Medicare home care utilization also became apparent in the 1990s.

With these changes came reports of widespread employee and patient dissatisfaction. Health care workers reported high levels of work stress and a decreased ability to supervise support staff and/or provide quality care. Three reports by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2000, 2001, and 2004, identified major safety and quality problems in American health care and directed attention to system-level sources of these problems. In response to these concerns, researchers, policymakers, and provider organizations have intensified their efforts to understand and change organizational and health system structures and processes that affect patient, employee and system outcomes.

PAPER OBJECTIVES

Organizational climate has been defined as the *employees' perceptions* of organizational features such as decision making, leadership, and norms about work. This article provides:

- A brief review of evidence on organizational factors and climate as they relate to the services provided, employee outcomes, patient outcomes and organizational outcomes.
- A discussion of the similarities and differences of the perceived organizational climate of home health care employees compared to other health care sectors.
- A model of organizational climate that was developed and tested across health care settings (including home healthcare).
- Suggestions on how to use the model in home health care.

FINDINGS

Employee Outcomes

Evidence is accumulating linking organizational climate to:

- Job satisfaction, intention to leave, employee health and safety.
- Employee satisfaction affects on staff performance.

Clinical and System Outcomes

- Patient satisfaction has been linked to organizational climate.
- Positive organizational climate may be a necessary condition for improvement processes.

An Integrative Model of Organizational Climate to Predict Key Outcomes

Many different definitions, measures and methods have been used to study organizational climate. A group of researchers from a variety of health care settings sought to bring consistency to the methods and collaborated on the development of a model of organizational climate.

- Important core domains include Leadership and Organizational Structure.
- Process domains include Supervision, Group Behavior, Quality Emphasis and Work Design.
- All domains affect employee outcomes and patient outcomes.
- Employee outcomes also affect patient outcomes.
- The model was valid across settings.
- The model may be useful to help home health care leaders measure organizational climate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HOME CARE

- Assessing select important aspects of organizational climate and outcomes pre- and post an implementation of change

would assist with the ability to evaluate the impact of the change.

- Routine assessment of employee's perceptions of organizational climate may help organizations better understand the work environment.
- Some hospitals chose to benchmark with other institutions. A similar system may be valuable in home health care.