AHA Team Training

Improving a Culture of Safety through Teamwork and Communication: TeamSTEPPS Implementation Stories from the Field

August 20, 2025

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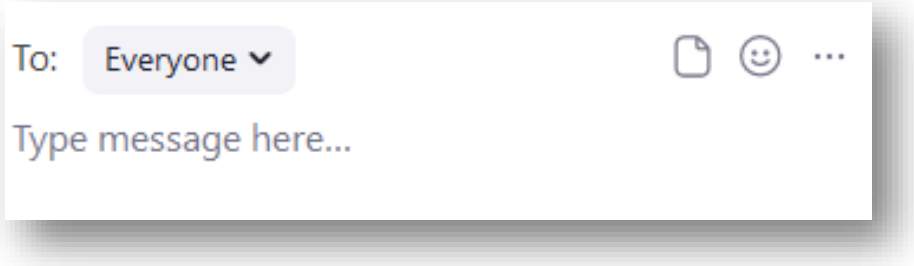

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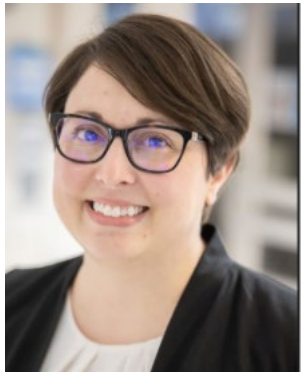
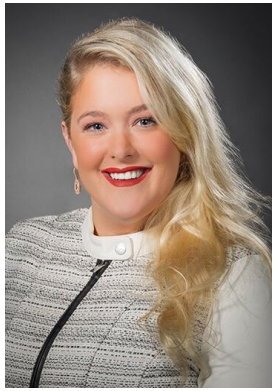
Today's Presenters

Lauren Schiff
Associate Chief Medical Officer of Quality & Safety
UNC Medical Center



Cristie Dangerfield
Patient Safety Officer
UNC Medical Center



Terry Dillman
Chief Nursing Officer
Northwell Health, Plainview Hospital, Syosset Hospital

Denise Mazzapica
Clinical Program Manager
Institute for Nursing, Northwell Health

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Objectives

Showcase TeamSTEPPS as the framework to improve teamwork and communication to impact patient safety culture, aligned with the AHA's Patient Safety Initiative.

Highlight successful TeamSTEPPS implementations at UNC Hospitals and Northwell Health, demonstrating improvements in the culture of safety through data and storytelling.

Introduce AHA Team Training's offerings—including member resources, regional trainings, and customized Advisory Services—to showcase how organizations can enhance teamwork and patient safety.

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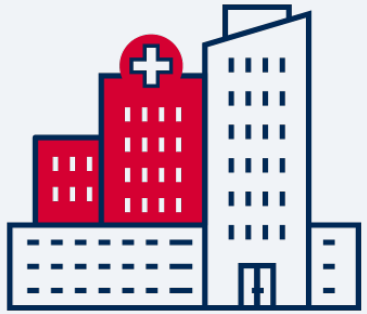
Imagine…

A strong culture of safety embedded throughout your organization.

Achieving excellence in patient safety and clinician resilience – despite workforce challenges.

Transforming a group of experts into a truly expert team.

The Problem…



Failure to **communicate clearly,** establish a **shared mental model** and consistently follow policy were the leading causes for reported sentinel events in 2024

(Joint Commission, 2024)

42% of nurses and **33%** of doctors are planning to leave their jobs by 2026

(Elsevier, 2023)

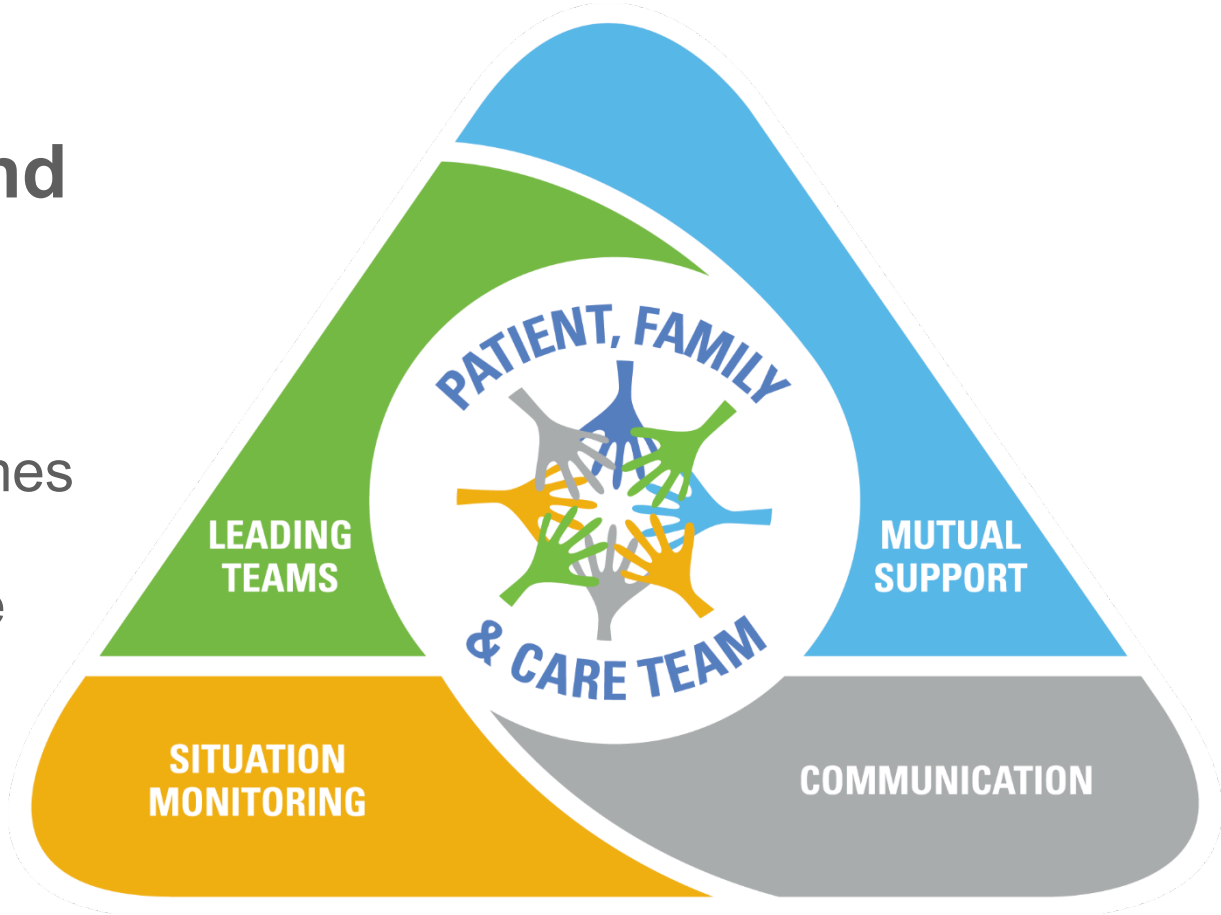
10-15% of health care expenditure is consumed by the direct sequelae of health care-related patient harm

(BMJ 2019)

TeamSTEPPS

Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety

- Evidence-based teamwork system aimed at optimizing patient outcomes by improving communication and teamwork skills among health care professionals
- Based on more than 30 years of research and evidence



How TeamSTEPPS Supports Broader Initiatives

INITIATIVE	HOW TEAMSTEPPS SUPPORTS IT
Just Culture: An environment that balances accountability with learning, where individuals are not punished for honest mistakes but are held responsible for reckless behavior	• Encourages open communication and respectful assertion • Provides tools for speaking up without fear and blame
Psychological Safety: A shared belief that it's safe to speak up, take risks, and make mistakes without fear of punishment or humiliation	• Builds trust through structured team communication • Fosters an environment where all voices are heard and valued
High Reliability Organizations (HROs): An organization that consistently avoids harm in complex, high-risk environments	• Structures reproducibility through predictable team processes • Decrease the noise through shared, standardized tools • Drives out variation using evidence-based best practices

Evidence That TeamSTEPPS Works

Positive Change in Behaviors

In a multispecialty physician practice that completed TeamSTEPPS training, 80% of leaders reported fewer breakdowns in communication, 90% felt better equipped to manage disagreements and 84% reported that disagreements were handled appropriately.
(AHRQ, 2021)

Process Efficiencies

TeamSTEPPS was associated with improved operating room efficiency, boosting on-time first start rates by 21% and decreasing mean case time by 12.7 minutes.
(Am J. Med Qual, 2016)

Cost Savings

A team-based program integrated behavioral health into every patient visit and saved a hospital system $13 million per year.
(PXJ, 2022)

Improved Outcomes

TeamSTEPPS was implemented on a Women's Health unit and saw a significant decrease in length of stay and the mortality index.
(Am J Med Qual, 2015)

Increased Patient Satisfaction

After efforts to improve interdepartmental teamwork at a Nashville health system, overall patient experience scores increased from a baseline of 64.41 to 79.71 one year later.
(J Interprof Educ Pract, 2020)

Enhanced Staff Satisfaction

An evaluation of a TeamSTEPPS implementation in an ICU found that teamwork improved and nurses planning to stay increased from 58% to 89% over 2 years' time.
(JNPD, 2020)

AHA Team Training

AHA Patient Safety Initiative (PSI)

Overview

- The AHA Patient Safety Initiative is a collaborative, data-driven movement that empowers hospitals and health systems to shape the national dialogue on health care safety – amplifying their voices and sharing their stories to drive meaningful change.

Focus areas

- **Culture of safety**
  - From board to bedside
  - Effective board processes + frontline support for just culture
  - PFAC involvement

- **Disparities in health outcomes**
- **Health care workforce safety**
- **Innovation engine**

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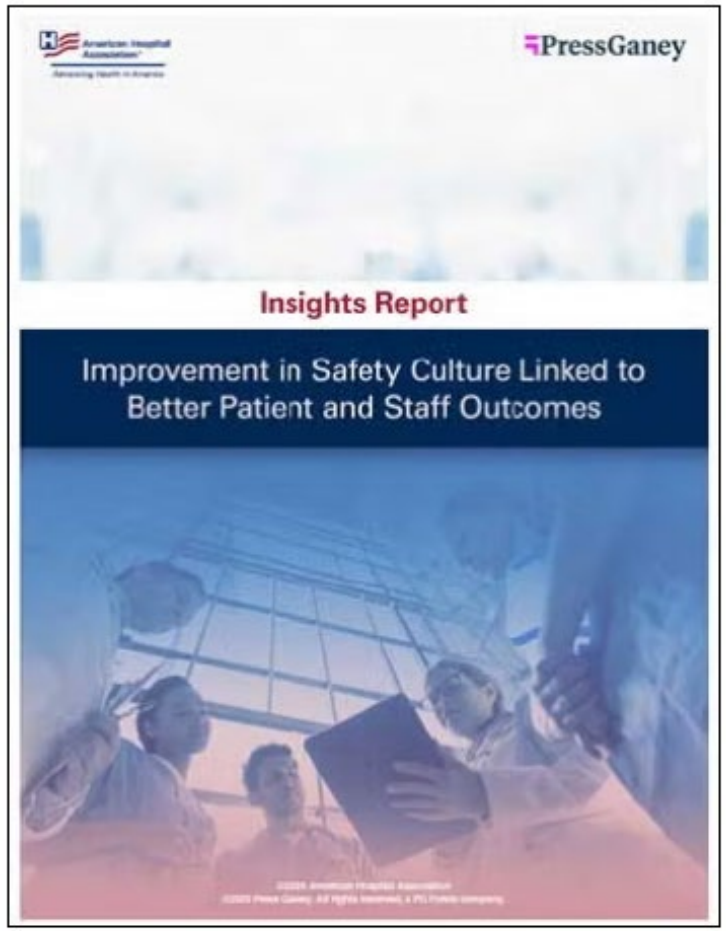
Insights Report – AHA and Press Ganey



https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2025/03/AHA-Insights-Report-Improvement-in-Safety-Culture.pdf

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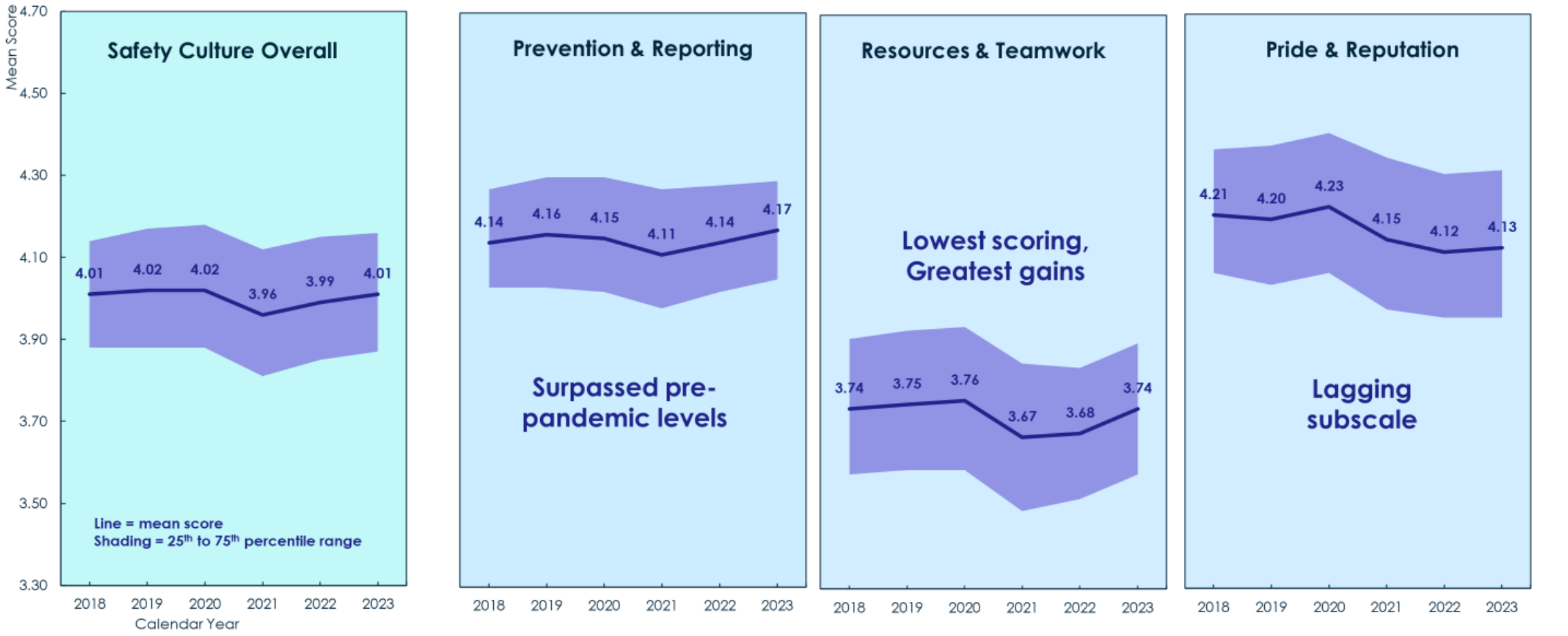
National Safety Culture on the rebound - Resources and Teamwork greatest potential for growth



PressGaney

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Employee Engagement and Patient Safety Culture

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UNC Medical Center TeamSTEPPS Journey

Cristie Dangerfield, MSN, RN, CNL, CPPS | Patient Safety Officer

Lauren D. Schiff, Professor of OBGYN, Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery | Assoc. CMO for Quality and Safety

UNC HEALTH

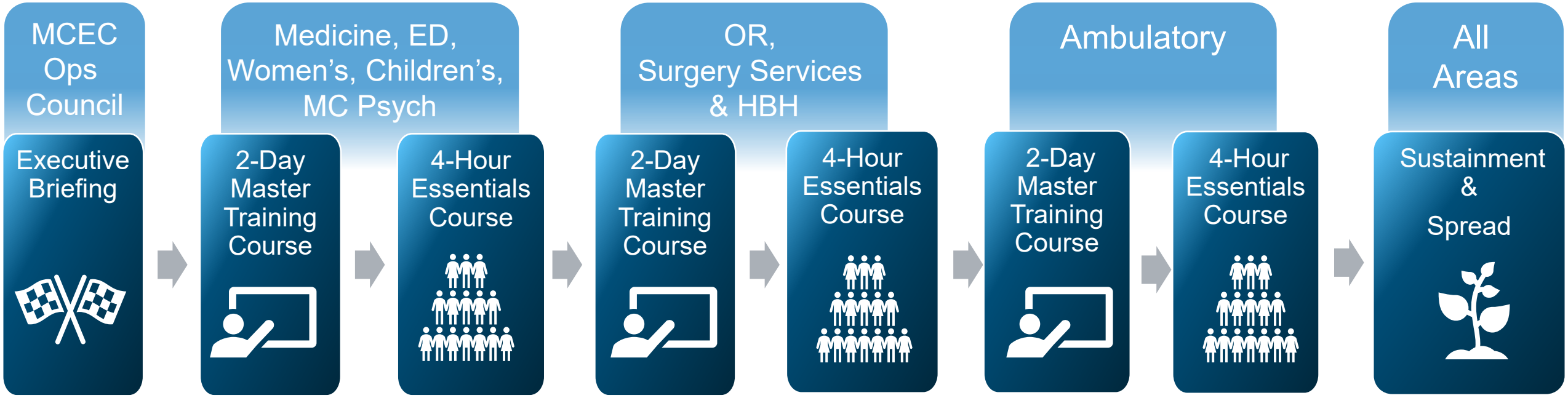
Carolina Quality

Our UNC Why

Survey Results:

- Lower teammate engagement and work/life balance scores
- High turnover and poor retention rates
- Patient Safety Culture Survey results
  - Handoffs
  - Communication
  - Feeling safe to speak up
- High number of events highlighting *teamwork and collaboration as* contributing factors

TeamSTEPPS Roadmap



AHA Coaching

February 2024	April 50 ppl	June 400 ppl	Sept 50 ppl	Sept 400 ppl	March 50 ppl	March 300 ppl	2025-2026

Executive Buy In

MCEC Ops Council

Executive Briefing

Creating a business case

- Demonstrating the risk if we don't act
- Highlighting the investment of acting
  - Financially
  - Culturally
  - Patient Outcomes
  - External Metrics

Educating the C-Suite

- Executive Debriefing (with AHA)
- Attending the class
  - Demonstrating quality of investment
  - Buy-in to program evangelists

Training Planning and Execution 3Ps

Purpose

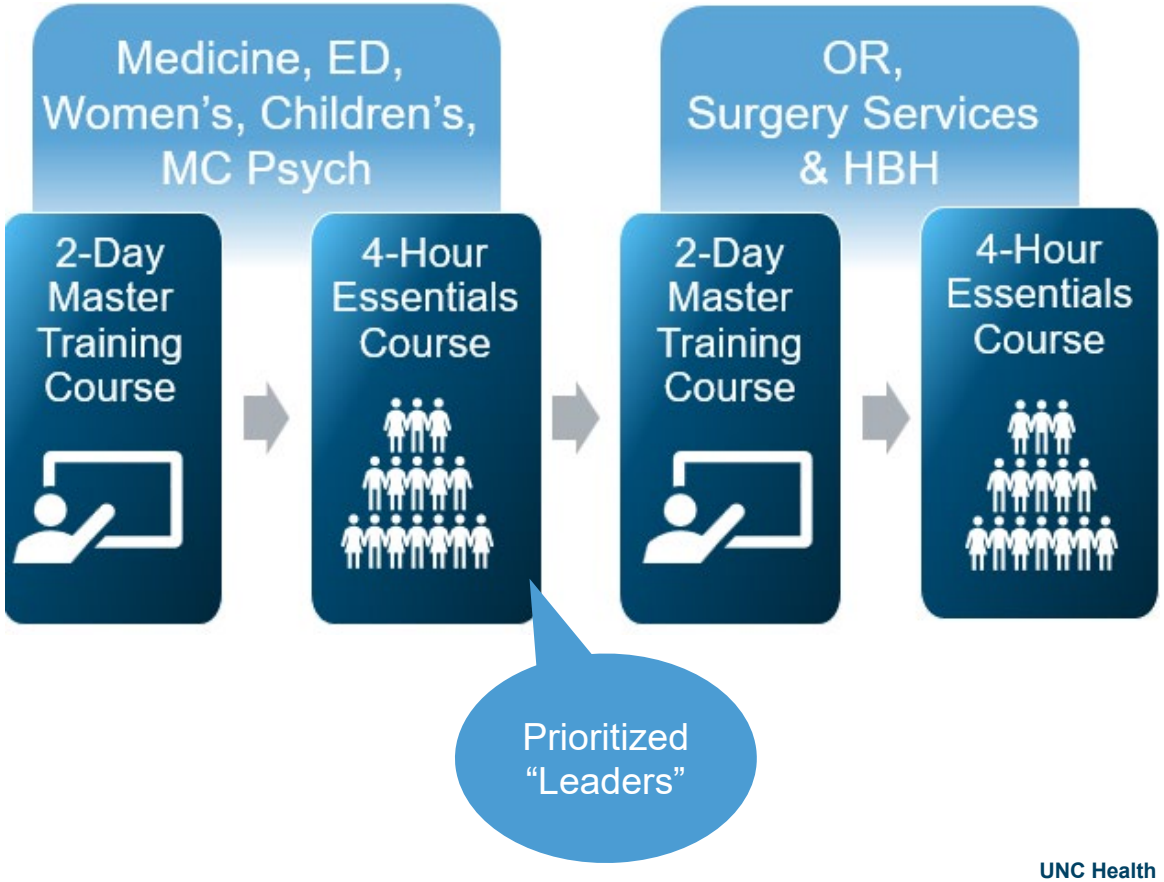
- Sustainability
- Embedded into UNC Culture

Product

- Cohort of Master Trainers
- Training program for current and new employees

People

- Fully trained workforce across all disciplines and departments



TeamSTEPPS Early Wins

"I didn't want to participate in TeamSTEPPS because I thought it was another 'thing' I had to do, but I am so glad I did!"

"Everyone I know that attended training said it was exciting and informative, and others can't wait to sign up."

"Our team is scheduling more debriefs to guide positive discussions, rather than just after something bad happens"

"We have been typing all escalations/emails up in SBAR format to re-enforce the tools and language to the whole department."

"I have asked my team to bring concerns to me using SBAR format."

Early Wins

Patient Relations

- The **situation** was not receiving follow up from people without multiple promptings.
- For **background**, the Patient Relations team has 7 business days according to CMS guidelines to respond to a patient grievance in writing.
- The group **assessed** that SBAR could help close communication gaps and piloted this process with some key team members. After positive feedback, implemented across the department.
- This story was shared multiple times with the **recommendation** of SBAR being an easy place to start a team on an implementation journey.

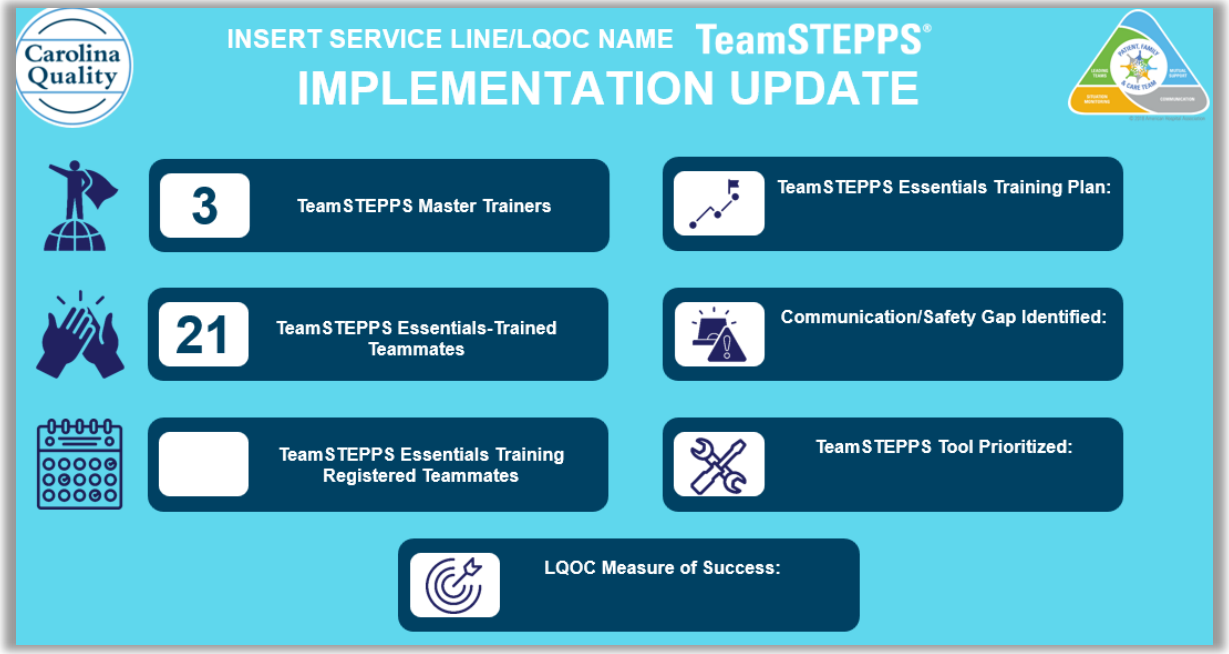
Sustainment

Spread

- Core group of trainers to lead teaching
- Accountability and reporting through quality structure
- Creating training opportunities for everyone
- Training dashboard

Sustainment

- Maintaining enough trainers
- Onboarding plan
- Tool of the month
- Recognition



Key Takeaways

- Be prepared to build the plane while flying it.
- Buy-in from Executive leadership is essential for success.
- Dedicated role to support the effort
- Build in examples for all roles and disciplines.
- Physician buy-in is the greatest challenge.
- The power of story telling.
- People appreciate good food and free parking!

Thank you

NORTHWELL HEALTH

From the Boardroom to the Frontline: TeamSTEPPS is part of our DNA

Northwell Health®

August 20, 2025

Our Why

Creating a Culture of Safety, Teamwork and Communication

- **Enhanced Patient Safety:** TeamSTEPPS reduces clinical errors and improves patient outcomes by fostering a culture of safety.
- **Operational Efficiency:** It's been linked to better workflow, fewer delays, and even cost savings.
- **Stronger Team Dynamics:** By emphasizing leadership, mutual support, and situation monitoring, it builds trust and cohesion among team members.
- **Improved Communication:** It equips teams with structured tools to ensure clear, accurate, and timely information exchange—especially critical in high-stakes environments.
- **Higher Staff Satisfaction:** Teams trained in TeamSTEPPS report greater job satisfaction, empowerment, and retention.

Northwell Health piloted TeamSTEPPS in 2007 with Enterprise implementation in 2008-2009

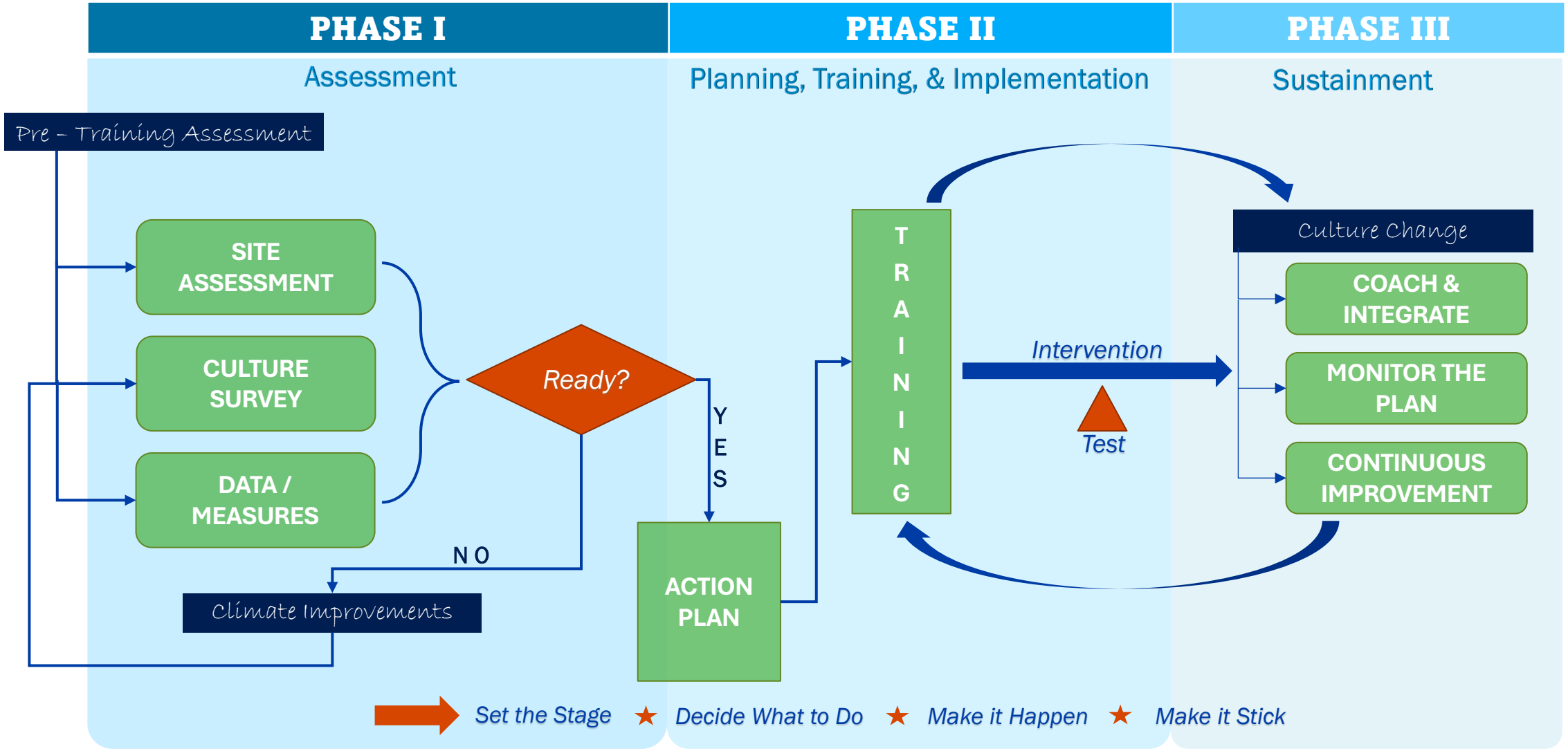
DM

Northwell Health Training & Implementation Plan

DM

ASSESSMENT, PLANNING, TRAINING, SUSTAINMENT

PHASED APPROACH



DM

Northwell Health Training

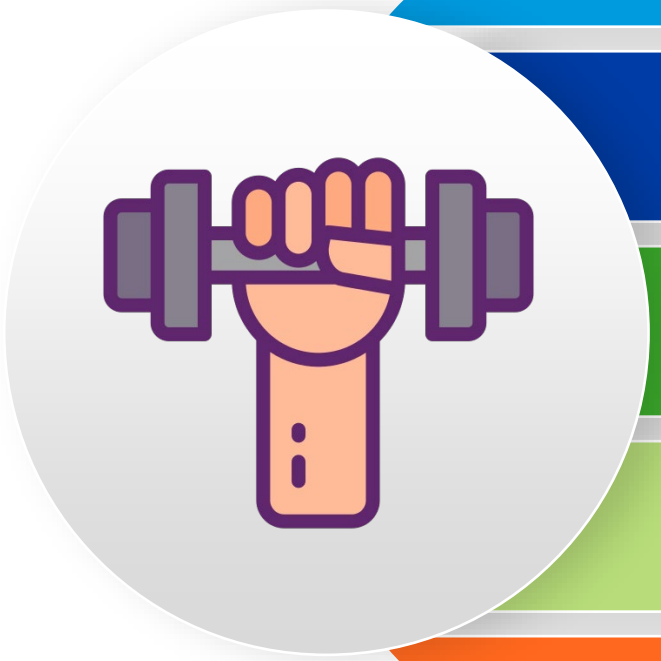
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND SPREAD APPROACH

Hospital	2007-2008	Jan'09	Feb'09	Mar'09	Apr'09	May'09	June'09	Jul'09	Aug'09	Sep'09	Oct'09	Nov'09	Dec'09
Plainview													
Schneider's													
LIJ													
NSUH													
SI North													
SI South													
Syosset													
Southside													
Franklin													
Glen Cove													
Huntington													
Zucker													
Forest Hills													
Sterns													
Orzc													

North Shore LIJ

DM

Early Wins/Successes with TeamSTEPPS Implementation

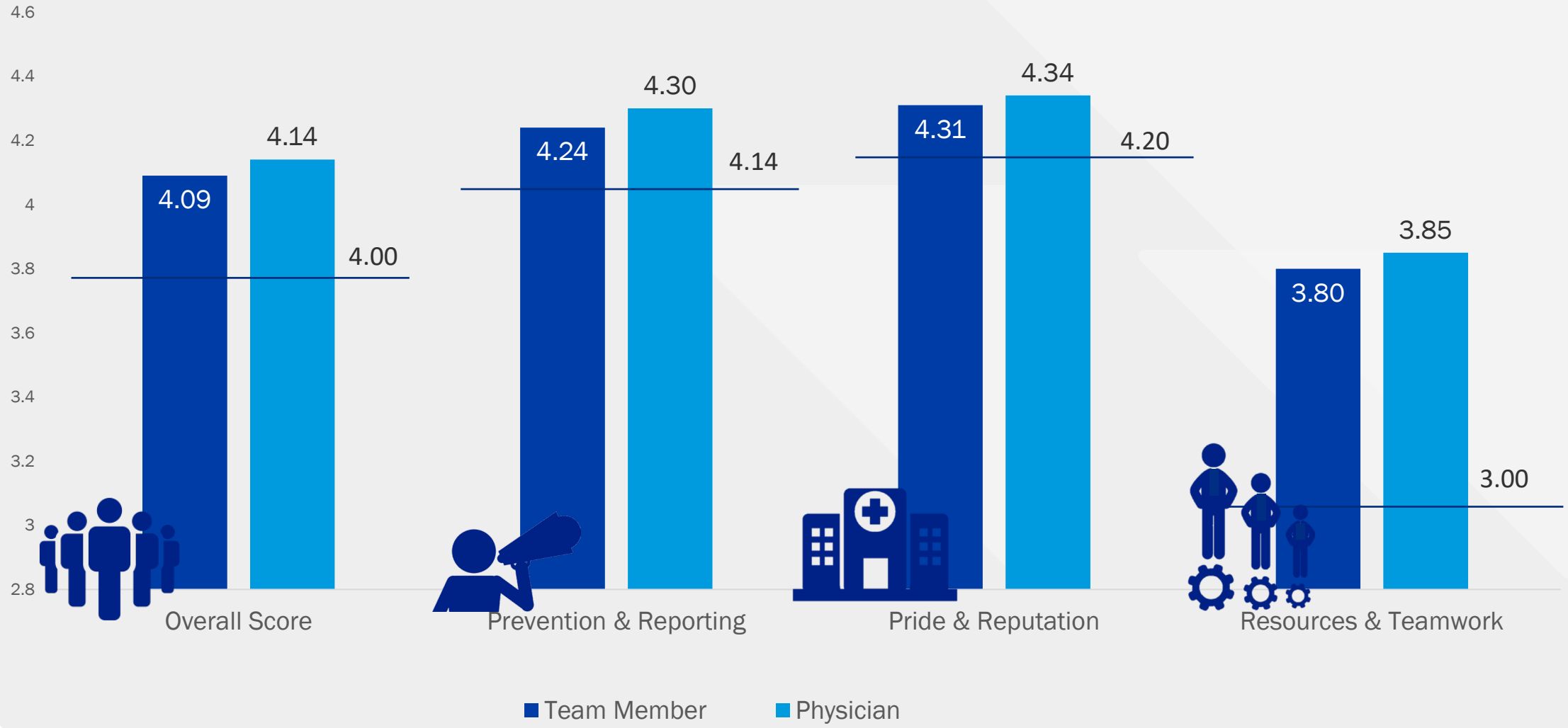


01	Culture	Our strong organizational culture fosters collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to excellence in all that we do. **Leadership Master Training Structure**
02	Workforce	Our dedicated workforce is trained, engaged, and empowered to deliver high-quality care and support to our patients and communities. **Team member training**
03	Patient & Community Focus	We prioritize the needs and feedback of our patients and the community, ensuring that our services are tailored to enhance their well-being. **Storytelling telling**
04	Outcomes: Safe & Reliable Care	We consistently achieve positive outcomes by delivering safe, reliable, and evidence-based care across all services we provide. **Success Stories used as exemplars**
05	Leadership: Accessibility & Availability	Our leadership is committed to being accessible and available, promoting transparency and effective communication throughout the organization.

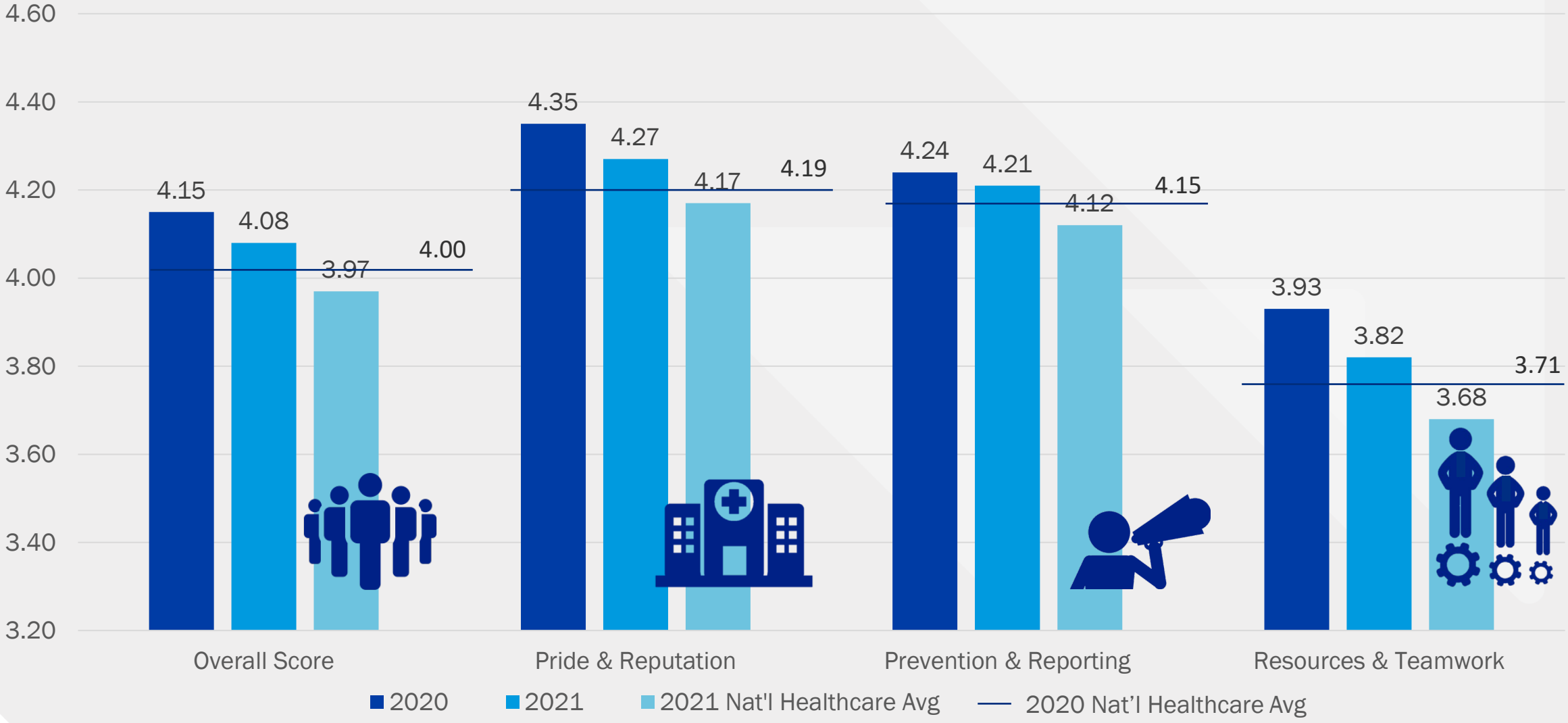
Plainview Hospital Pilot Site SUCCESS Story in Action

TD

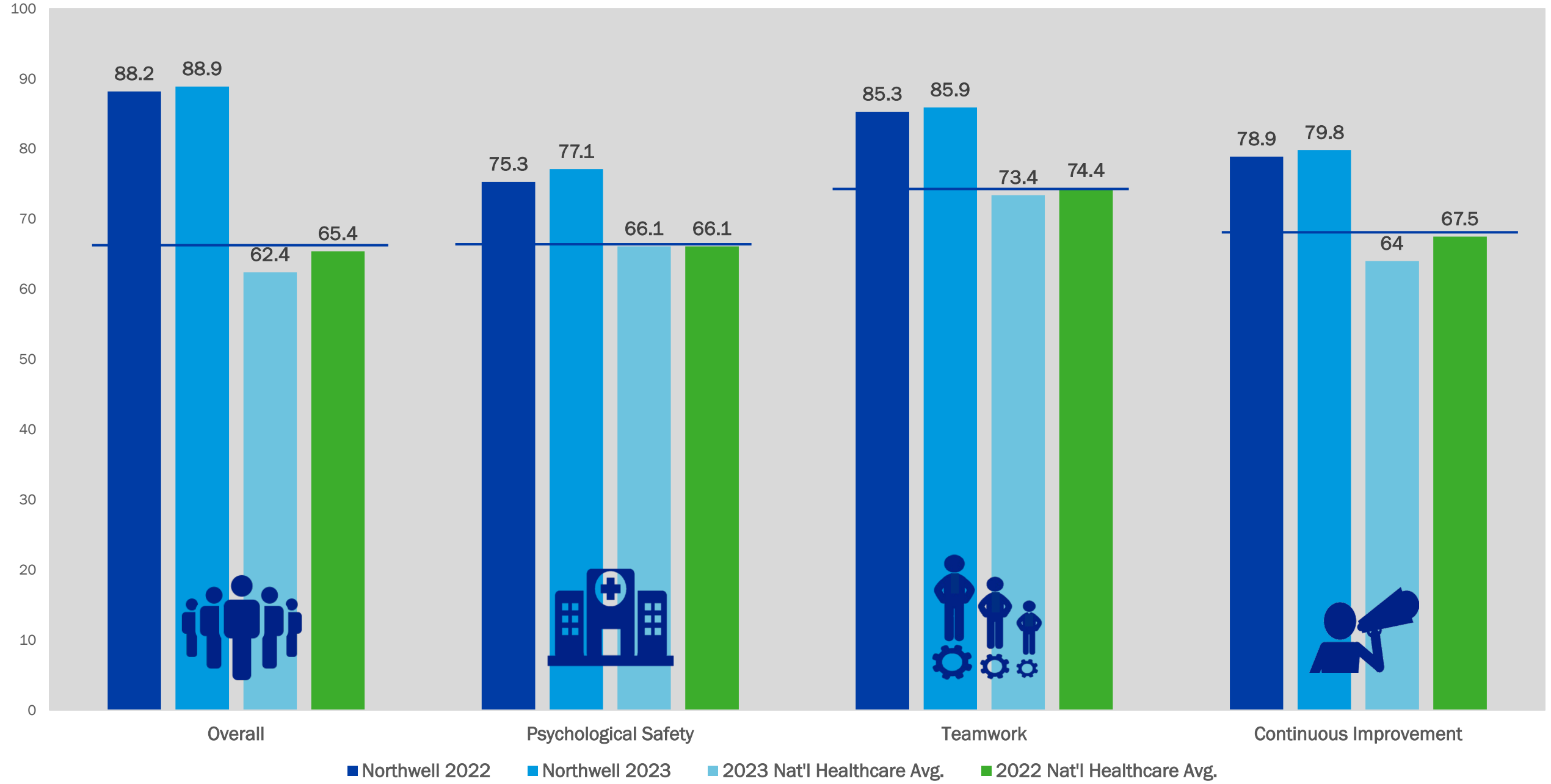
NORTHWELL CULTURE OF SAFETY
DOMAIN PERFORMANCE 2019



Culture of Safety Domain Performance 2020 - 2021



Culture of Safety Domains 2022-2023



TEAMSTEPPS IN ACTION

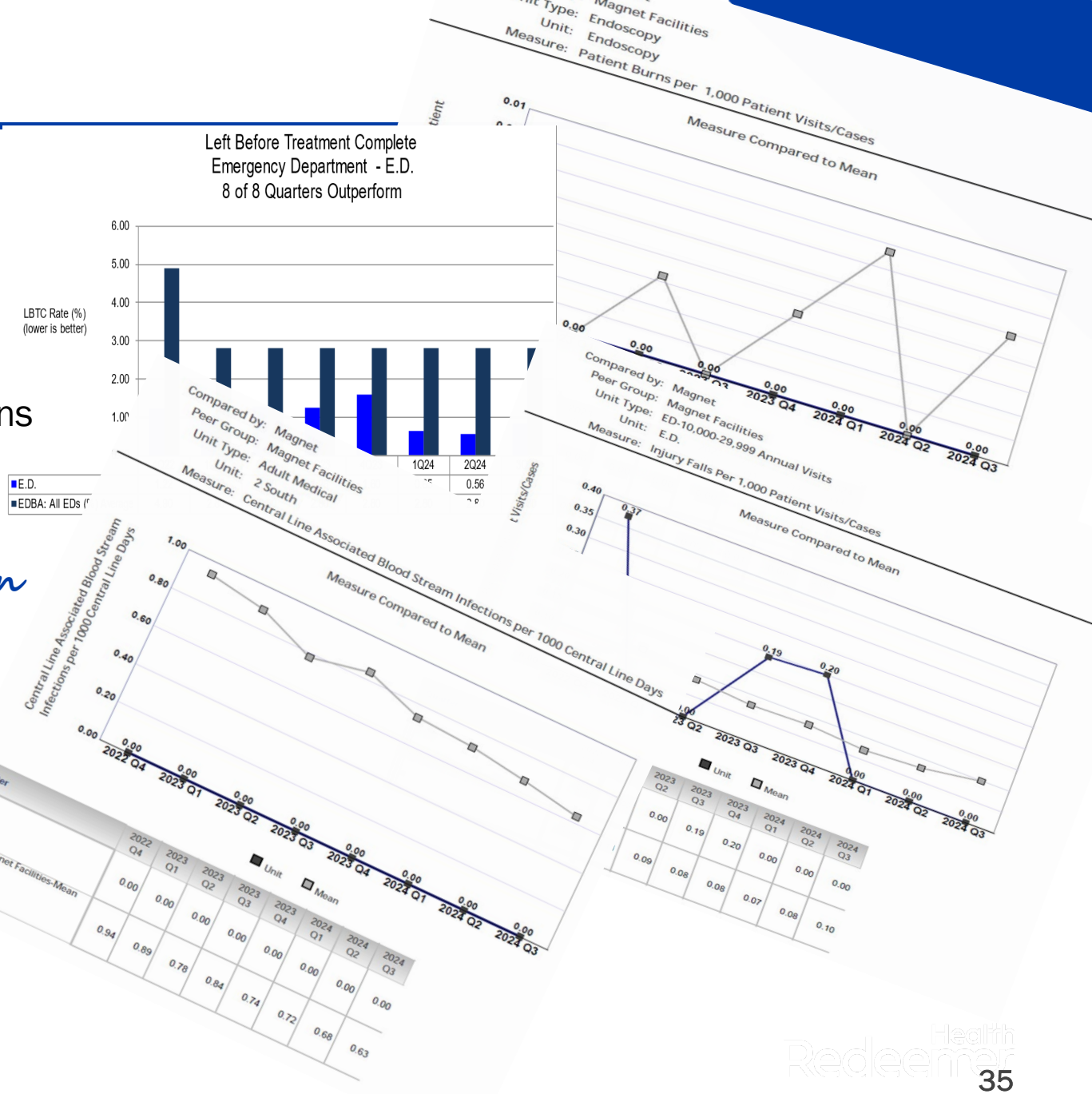
Success Stories in Action:

- Periop/ENDO- Patient Burns
- ED- Left Before to Treatment Complete
- Central Line Associated Blood Stream Infections
- Fall with injury

Utilizing TEAMSTEPPS Language in Action

Perioperative Service Kidney Transplant Patient

- Stop the Line
- CUS



Sustainment

TEAMSTEPPS IS NOT AN INITIATIVE, IT IS FOUNDATIONAL TO ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICE

- **Embed TeamSTEPPS into all organizational processes:**
  - new employee orientation (nursing, support staff, physicians and non-clinical staff)
  - simulation for clinical staff
  - competencies, policies and guidelines
- **Ongoing TeamSTEPPS:** Master Training for new leadership, coaching, refreshers
- **Redose:** as needed for site teams
- **Monthly Agenda** item for Unit Meetings with frontline staff
- **Problem solving** utilizing TeamSTEPPS tools and strategies as targeted interventions
- **System structure:** with site level ownership

KEY TAKEAWAYS

ADVICE FOR ORGANIZATIONS CONSIDERING THIS WORK

Executive and Physician Leadership Support

- Ongoing executive leadership support is essential
- Physician partnership is crucial
- Ongoing monitoring and coaching of tools and strategies

Standardized Implementation

- Standardize implementation – rapid, systematic, structured
- Cohort units according to a planned implementation sequence
- Interdisciplinary approach to training

Organized Plan for Sustainment

- Infrastructure for implementation and sustainment
- Do NOT dilute TeamSTEPPS training
- (integrate into other trainings, shorten training)

Results

- Enterprise Roll-out and expanded implementation plan to Nuvance
- Northwell Outperformance on all 9 domains of the Culture of Safety Cultures

THANK YOU

Upcoming Team Training Events

In-person Master Training Courses – Registration Open!

- October 6-7| New Orleans, LA | Tulane
- October 20-21 | New Hyde Park, NY | Northwell
- November 5-6 | Houston, TX | Houston Methodist
- December 4-5| Los Angeles, CA | UCLA

Virtual Master Training Course – Registration Open!

- September 25 – November 13 | University of Washington

Virtual TeamSTEPPS Sustainment Workshops – Registration Open!

- Preparing for TeamSTEPPS Essentials | Sept 24 @ 11:00 am-12:30 pm CT
- The People of a TeamSTEPPS Implementation | Oct 30 @ 11:00 am-12:30 pm CT
- Strategies for Long-Term Sustainability | Nov 10 @ 1:00-2:30 pm CT

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Custom TeamSTEPPS Advisory Services at Your Organization

TeamSTEPPS Master Training Course

Using a train-the-trainer model, **we give you the foundational tools** and concepts, and train your staff through this **two-day training** program. You will gain a team of Master Trainers ready to teach others in your organization.

Comprehensive TeamSTEPPS Programs

We help you along the way. After delivery of the two-day Master Training course, we continue to work with your team for **3-6 months**, building the internal capacity to hardwire TeamSTEPPS throughout your organization.

Contact TeamTraining@aha.org to learn more

> Our relationship with the TeamSTEPPS faculty and the on-site trainings were both phenomenal. **They did a great job of meeting us where we were** and customized a program that really helped us gain clarity about the problem we're trying to solve.
>
> – **Melissa Riffe-Guyer**
> Executive Director,
> Culture Cone Health

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TeamSTEPPS Resources

Learn About TeamSTEPPS

Get more details and information about TeamSTEPPS, an evidence-based methodology to help optimize team performance, bolster staff well-being, and increase patient safety.

- **About TeamSTEPPS and Team Training** – high-level overview of TeamSTEPPS and our Team Training program
- **Understanding TeamSTEPPS Guide** – in-depth look at the TeamSTEPPS methodology and various implementation strategies
- **Making the Case for TeamSTEPPS** – customizable slide deck with the latest TeamSTEPPS data and facilitator notes for making your pitch

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TeamSTEPPS Resources

Share TeamSTEPPS Data & Stories

Dive into TeamSTEPPS data collected from the field, including our exclusive TeamSTEPPS Success Stories from our past partners and clients.

- **Webinar Library** – on-demand access to over 80+ AHA Team Training webinar recordings and slides
- **Research and Evidence Base** – catalogue of citations covering TeamSTEPPS applications as well as evaluation efforts
- **TeamSTEPPS Success Stories** – collection of snapshots from a variety of organizations and TeamSTEPPS programs

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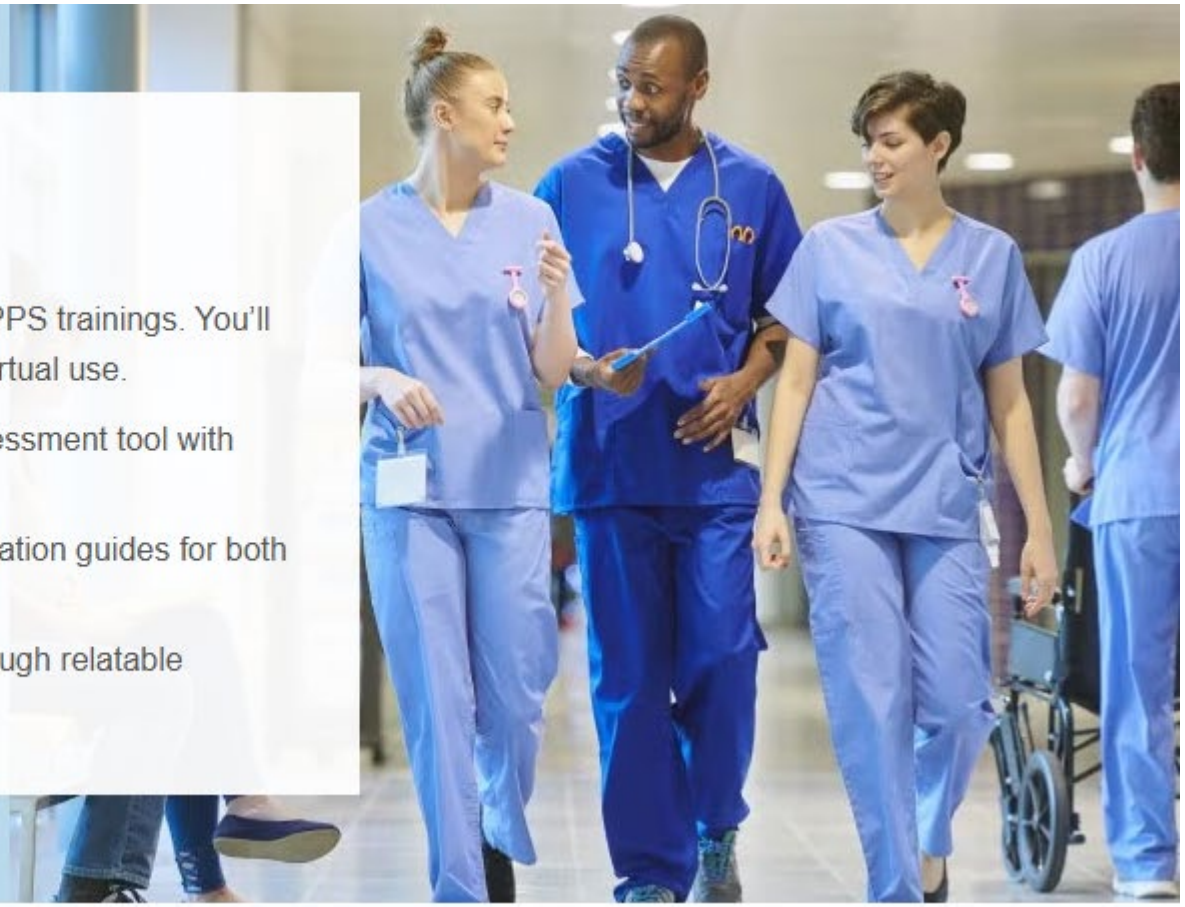
TeamSTEPPS Resources

TeamSTEPPS Training Tools

Get materials to assess your readiness and run your own TeamSTEPPS trainings. You'll find options for in-person courses, and an out-of-the-box option for virtual use.

- **Pre-TeamSTEPPS Implementation Checklist** – self-guided assessment tool with best practices and helpful tips
- **TeamSTEPPS Training Resources** – course materials and facilitation guides for both Essentials and Master Training options
- **TeamSTEPPS Video Toolkit** – explore commonly used tools through relatable scenarios, critical thinking prompts, and interactive examples



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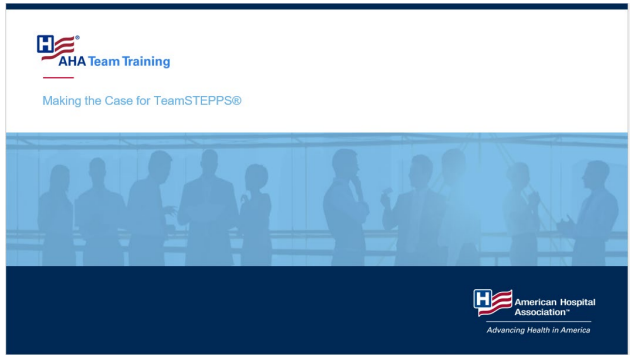
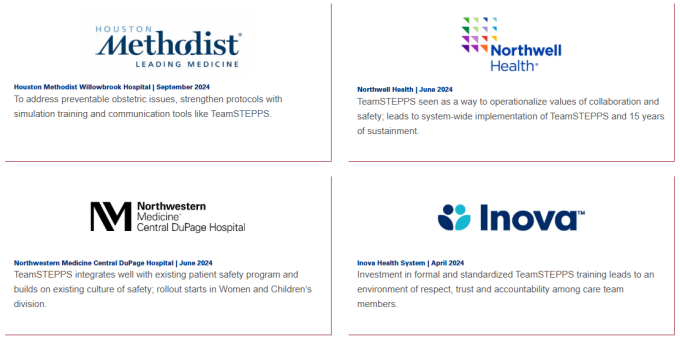
TeamSTEPPS Resources

aha.org/center/team-training/resources



Making the Case for TeamSTEPPS – customizable PPT



TeamSTEPPS Success Stories – implementation stories from across the country

TeamSTEPPS Video Toolkit – on-demand microlearning of the most popular tools

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Final Reminders

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