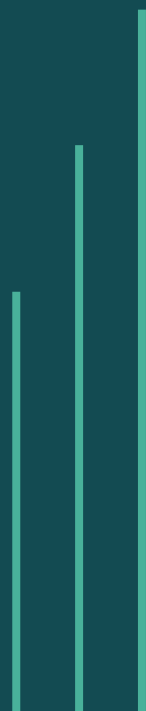


Patient Safety Culture:

Insights, Risks, and Readiness
Playbook for Florida Health Systems



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Introduction Summary

01

Why Patient Safety Needs a New Approach

Patient safety is a critical component of healthcare quality. Despite significant advancements, preventable harm is still a considerable concern in healthcare settings. Multiple national and local requirements are shaping up to affect patient safety improvements positively.

At Beterra, we believe these are proactive steps towards continuous improvement and high reliability in patient care. We are confident that they will enhance patient safety.



- National & Local Requirements
- Lessons from the Field
- Strategic Recommendations

This white paper outlines the essential components of the recent changes in the national and local expectations and strategic recommendations for healthcare systems to meet and exceed these requirements.

Converging National and Local Requirements

Patient safety is moving from aspiration to accountability, driven by a convergence of federal and state mandates that collectively reshape expectations for health systems. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has introduced the Patient Safety Structural Measure (PSSM) as part of the FY 2025 Inpatient Prospective Payment System (IPPS) rule.



- ✓ Biennial Safety Culture Surveys
- ✓ Pulse Surveys in Off Years
- ✓ Transparent Reporting
- ✓ Unit-Level Action Required

This new measure evaluates how hospitals operationalize safety improvement infrastructure and leadership commitment to patient safety. It requires routine administration of a validated safety culture survey (e.g., AHRQ SOPS, AHCA's instrument) at least biennially, supplemented by targeted pulse surveys during off years. Survey results must be transparently shared with both hospital staff and governing boards and used to drive unit-level improvement interventions.

Simultaneously, Florida's HB 763 mandates the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to collect and publicly report safety culture survey data from hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers (ASCs) using the AHCA Patient Safety Survey on a biannual schedule. This state requirement reinforces many of the same expectations around measurement frequency, survey methodology, and the visibility of results.

Together, these mandates are not isolated compliance obligations, but they are a synchronized call to action. Health systems must respond with strategic, infrastructure-backed ePorts to measure, understand, and improve safety culture at both the organizational and unit levels. As public transparency grows, so too does the reputational and operational pressure to demonstrate credible, data-driven progress in both patient and workforce safety.

Florida Benchmarking Experience: Preparing for AHCA Reporting

Beterra Health has partnered with more than 100 health systems and several ambulatory surgical centers across Florida to prepare for safety culture reporting to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA). To support this effort, we developed an initial comparative database and a Florida-based benchmark, enabling organizations to understand real-world readiness and identify what it takes to drive measurable improvement. Our first benchmarking cohort included 65 hospitals and more than 75,000 healthcare providers and ancillary staff, who contributed feedback and insights throughout 2023 and 2025.



100+ health systems & surgical centers partnered



Florida-based safety culture database established



75,000+ staff voices included



Cohort spanned 65 facilities (2023–2025)

These are the critical insights we gained through this process:

● High Engagement, High Expectations

One of the most striking findings from the Florida benchmark is the exceptional level of engagement. Response rates were 27% higher than national averages, reflecting a strong commitment among healthcare organizations to meet the mandate head-on. This high participation sets a clear expectation: Florida hospitals should anticipate robust peer comparison once AHCA begins publishing results. However, the data also revealed a weak correlation between response rates and overall perceptions of safety culture. Though this may suggest that while engagement is necessary, it's not sufficient; meaningful culture improvement depends on what organizations do beyond the survey itself. High engagement offers a call to action from frontline staff on the significant need for sustainable and continued improvement infrastructure.

● Local Action and Organizational Improvement as Key Drivers of Change

The clearest lever for improving safety culture was Organizational Learning and Continuous Improvement, which showed a near-perfect correlation ($r = .938$) with overall

scores. This highlights the importance of translating survey feedback into actionable local plans. Facilities that regularly review practices, evaluate changes, and prevent repeated safety issues were more likely to report strong safety cultures. AHCA’s Care Composite “willingness to seek care” questions also demonstrated that perceptions of teamwork and local unit culture are tightly linked to trust in care. In other words, if staff wouldn’t seek care in their own unit, it’s a red flag not just for patient experience but for underlying safety risks.

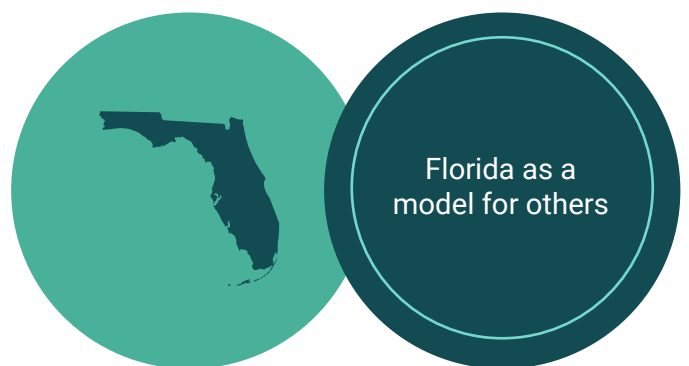
● Unit-Level Variability a Strong Barrier

Unit-Level Variability a Strong Barrier: Despite overall positive perceptions (+1.8% vs. national benchmark), a deeper dive revealed wide variability at the unit level. Out of more than 4,400 units, 716 units significantly trailed the Florida benchmark, suggesting concentrated areas of risk that can be masked by organization-wide averages. Using Beterra’s risk scoring methodology, 26% of units were identified as medium or high risk across metrics including engagement, second victimization, burnout, and overall perceptions of safety culture. These hotspots offer clear targets for focused intervention and underscore the importance of granular, unit-based analysis in any improvement strategy.

● Second Victims and Workforce Support a Significant Opportunity

Nearly 10,000 second victims, clinicians affected by involvement in adverse events, were identified in the dataset that Beterra collects beyond the AHCA survey. ICU staff were most frequently impacted, with second victimization rates approaching 20% in some units. Yet support was inconsistent: while some facilities offered support to 67% of affected staff, others reached only 17%. This gap highlights a critical area for action. Strengthening caregiver support not only creates a healthy workforce but has a demonstrable impact on safety culture perceptions and workforce resilience.

Florida’s early experience in responding to the safety culture mandate offers a valuable playbook for other states or systems navigating similar requirements. As public reporting draws near, these insights provide a strategic foundation for hospitals to refine their approach, invest in continuous improvement, and create safer and trustworthy care environments for both patients and staff.



What to do beyond the initial submission?

To ensure safety culture improvement and sustainability, proactively focus on creating infrastructural improvements, as outlined below.



- ✓ Build Infrastructure & Roadmap
- ✓ Measure & Benchmark Regularly
- ✓ Support & Protect Workforce
- ✓ Fund & Sustain Action Plans

● Establish Safety Culture Roadmap and Improvement Infrastructure

It is important to establish a long-term safety culture improvement roadmap that bolsters safety culture initiatives either through utilizing existing quality improvement frameworks or establishing robust systems if none are in place. Implement digital tools for large-scale data collection and analysis to garner comprehensive, actionable insights. Systems employing these digital tools often experience significantly higher staff engagement in patient safety and quality improvement activities.

● Conduct Regular Surveys and Participate in Benchmarking Initiatives

Schedule culture of safety surveys (full and pulse checks) regularly to monitor progress and pinpoint areas for improvement. This measurement approach should align with the requirements of different stakeholders: CMS, AHCA, Joint Commission, LeapFrog, etc. For example, Beterra will continue to create and support a comparative database focused on patient safety culture data and workforce safety culture across the state. By participating, members can access detailed comparisons of their individual hospital or system's performance against the broader membership, enhancing their understanding and driving improvements. Beterra will leverage Beterra's national data and AHCA state-wide (once it becomes available) data on an ongoing basis to help Florida Hospital Association (FHA members) and others in the state.

● Enhance Staff Support Systems

As a significant correlation exists between the support provided to second victims and patient safety culture, enhance your safety culture measurements by integrating joy in work and second victimization support measures into the survey. Develop and fortify support systems for staff recognized as second victims to cultivate a nurturing environment essential for fostering a positive patient safety culture. Implementing peer support solutions can benefit frontline staff and organizational leaders.

● Allocate Sufficient Resources

Ensure adequate resources and budgeting are in place for survey administration, data management, and the development of action plans. This allocation is crucial to maintain and enhance a robust safety culture measurement and improvement program.



Closing Summary

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Committed to Continuous Improvement

Compliance with Florida’s HB 763 and Rule 59A-35.115 presents an opportunity for healthcare systems to enhance their patient safety culture significantly long term. Health systems can meet regulatory requirements and foster a culture of continuous improvement and safety for patients and staff by adopting a strategic, proactive approach and leveraging the outlined recommendations.



Compliance is not just obligation but an opportunity to improve safety.

About Beterra

Beterra is a healthcare technology company focused on building tools for safety and quality management.

Our solutions help clients accelerate improvement via collection, analysis, sensemaking, and safety and quality data utilization.

Scan the QR code to explore our website or contact us at hello@beterra.com

