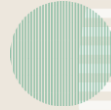


RESOURCE GUIDE



Breaking the Rules for Better Care

IHI Leadership Alliance



Institute *for*
Healthcare
Improvement

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An Invitation to Break the Rules

Dear Colleagues,

We are thrilled that you are considering the [IHI Leadership Alliance](#)'s "Breaking the Rules for Better Care" efforts within your organization. As the health care landscape continues to evolve, we need those at all levels of the organization to help us surface and share the rules, habits, policies, and procedures that get in the way of a better care experience for patients or staff. This liberates teams to do the work that matters most to them and to the people they serve.



The IHI Leadership Alliance, a dynamic collaboration of leaders from health systems across North America, is united by a common mission: to work with one another — and in partnership with our patients, workforces, and communities — to deliver on the full promise of the IHI Triple Aim. In 2016, Alliance members led a pioneering, week-long "Breaking the Rules" initiative, asking the simple question: *If you could break or change one rule in service of a better care experience for patients or staff, what would it be and why?* Over those five days, Alliance members surfaced 342 rules that patients and staff perceived to offer no value, bringing waste, obstacles, and misconceptions to light for their organizations to address and resolve. We hope this resource guide provides tools and ideas for you to do the same.

By breaking the rules for better care, you are setting a powerful example for your staff and the health care community at large by embracing the [principles of radical redesign](#) and continually seeking to improve the experiences of our patients and staff. We know these efforts will be illuminating, inspiring, and impactful. We are grateful to be a part of such an impressive and brave community of improvers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derek Feeley'.

Derek Feeley, DBA
President and Chief Executive Officer
Institute for Healthcare Improvement

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Berwick'.

Don Berwick, MD, MPP, FRCP
President Emeritus and Senior Fellow
Institute for Healthcare Improvement

Getting Started: What Is “Breaking the Rules for Better Care”?

“Breaking the Rules for Better Care” was developed and initiated by the IHI Leadership Alliance in 2016 as a way to identify health care “rules” that get in the way of the care experience. As health care leaders, we aim to provide positive experiences for patients, families, and staff. However, sometimes we may inadvertently create processes or policies that have an unintended impact on the people we work to serve and support. To view the existing system with a new lens, Leadership Alliance members and other organizations have been asking their patients, families, and staff: *If you could break or change one rule in service of a better care experience for patients or staff, what would it be and why?*

IHI has prepared this resource guide to help your organization get started with similar “Breaking the Rules” efforts.

Step 1: Let Us Know You Are Participating

We’d love to hear from you! Email IHIAllianceTeam@ihi.org and let us know when your organization is undertaking a “Breaking the Rules” initiative. Consider participating as one team, one unit, one floor, or as a whole organization. We recommend having a focused time period for your efforts, such as one week.

Step 2: Share

To get the word out about “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” and engage your staff, you can:

- Include a sample [announcement](#) in an upcoming staff email or newsletter (page 8).
- Educate your colleagues with these [talking points](#) (page 9).
- Ask patients, their families, and staff these [sample questions](#) (page 10).
- Create a [template](#) to record suggestions for rules to break or change (page 11).
- Review IHI’s [New Rules for Radical Redesign](#) to get your staff thinking creatively about care redesign.
- Read the *JAMA* Viewpoint article “[Breaking the Rules for Better Care](#)” or listen to the WIHI: [Breaking the Rules: Lessons from IHI’s Leadership Alliance](#).
- Encourage members to have fun, including visual tools to indicate participation. For example, Alliance leaders wore and distributed [stickers](#) in their organizations. Others have taken advantage of common areas like waiting rooms, staff break areas, and entrance spaces to query in person or collect asynchronous feedback.



Step 3: Mobilize

Who do you want to ask?

Decide whom from your organization you would like to participate. You can engage on whatever scale makes sense to you, whether that means asking only staff, only patients, or asking a small team to participate (versus requesting that the organization at large contribute). At this time it will also be important to decide how and when you will communicate the outputs and potential next steps to those who participated. (Suggestions for communication are included below.)

How will you ask?

Decide on the most effective method to collect suggestions from patients, families, and staff at your organization. Some suggested approaches include:

- **Email:** Email your staff and ask that they send you their suggestions for what rules they would break or change and why.
- **In person:** Consider asking in waiting rooms, break rooms, or during team meetings.
- **Survey:** Create a simple survey using an online survey tool such as [SurveyMonkey](#). This may be the best approach if you think anonymity will be important.

What will you ask?

We recommend asking staff, patients, and their families: *If you could break or change one rule in service of a better care experience for patients or staff, what would it be and why?* Or, refer to this [list](#) for some alternative questions.

What will you do with the suggestions you receive?

- **How to collect suggestions:**

Create a [template](#) that works for you to record and categorize the suggestions you receive. One Leadership Alliance member found it helpful to recruit health professional students to populate the template.

Based on the experiences of our early adopters, the suggestions and potential actions will likely fall into three categories (see table on the next page).

- **Inform staff how you will follow up:**

When you start collecting suggestions, let participants know how you will follow up with them after they submit their ideas. For example:

“Our organization aims to collect X (number) suggestions, and will report back to you on our plans to take action by Y (date). The suggestions we receive will be used to improve care at our organization as well as generate a national dialogue about rules that get in the way of delivering better care.”

Don't forget to thank participants for contributing to this effort!

Category	Definition	Potential Action	Example
Rules that need clarity	<p>Rules that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths or habits that are perceived to be rules • Created for a reason, but their meaning may have been lost over time • Unclear based on interpretation of policies or regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debunk organizational myths • Tie the rationale back to the rule • Seek clarification from the entities that put the rules in place (e.g., communicating with the US Department of Health & Human Services about HIPAA) 	<p>One organization consulted the Board of Pharmacy about regulations preventing sending patients home with the medications they had been using during their stay in the hospital. They discovered that, in fact, if inpatient pharmacists relabeled those medications, they were able to send them home safely with patients, thus preventing waste.</p>
Rules that need redesign	<p>Administrative rules that leaders have the power to change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select rules to revise • Connect with colleagues through the IHI Leadership Alliance or other professional associations or affiliations about how to advance forward 	<p>An organization realized that partners in the family birthing center were hungry after long hours waiting for mothers to deliver. Staff suggested the idea to redesign the rules and provide food to “feed all the partners” in the birthing center.</p>
Rules that need advocacy	<p>Rules that are in place due to regulations or policies beyond organizational control</p>	<p>Either independently or with professional networks, use the power of collective voice to engage the appropriate entities and advocate for rules to be changed</p>	<p>During the Leadership Alliance’s “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” Week, many organizations identified wanting to eliminate the three-day rule, requiring a patient to spend three consecutive days as an inpatient in a hospital to qualify for Medicare coverage of a skilled nursing facility. Alliance members spoke directly with representatives from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services at an in-person meeting about the rule (among others) to advocate for change.</p>

Step 4: Take Action and Report Back

After sorting the submissions using the three categories of rules, determine with your staff and patients what action you will take. Share your learnings with the Alliance team at IHIAAllianceTeam@ihi.org. We are thrilled that you are taking part in this effort, and we are excited to hear more about your experiences and findings.

If you are interested in learning more about the Leadership Alliance, please contact Alyssa Saraswat, IHI Senior Project Manager, at asaraswat@ihi.org.

Resources

Sample Email/Newsletter Announcement Text

Feel free to modify the following announcement to raise awareness within your organization about “Breaking the Rules for Better Care.”

[Your organization name] is proud to announce that we are engaging in an effort to provide a better care experience for patients, families, and staff by participating in “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” Week [or another timeframe] on [insert dates here].

As an organization, we aim to provide positive experiences for patients, families, and staff. However, sometimes we inadvertently create processes or policies that have an unintended impact on the people we work to serve and support. To view the existing system through a new lens, for one week [or another timeframe] we will encourage our patients, families, and staff to answer the question: **If you could break or change one rule in service of a better care experience for patients or staff, what would it be and why?**

The suggestions we receive will be used to improve care at our organization [insert other actions, as needed].

[Insert how here]

For more information, or to learn how to share your idea(s) for a rule you would like to see changed, please email [insert contact person here].

Sincerely,

[Insert names]

Talking Points

Modify and utilize this page as a reference guide to share information and answer any questions your staff may have about “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” efforts.

What is “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” Week? “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” Week was developed and led by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) [Leadership Alliance](#). The initial week-long event took place in 2016 and challenged health systems to identify the rules, habits, policies, or procedures that may get in the way of positive experiences for our staff and patients.

For one week, Alliance members asked their patients, their families, and our staff: *If you could break or change one rule in service of better care for patients or staff, what would it be and why?*

How do I suggest a rule I’d like to break or change? *[Describe based on how you decide to collect suggestions.]*

What will happen with the rules once we submit them? We will work to categorize your submissions and take action as follows: *[Describe based on how you decide to take action.]*

Category	Definition	Potential Action
Rules that need clarity	Either rules that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths or habits that are perceived to be rules • Created for a reason, but meaning has been lost over time • Unclear based on interpretation of policies or regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debunk organizational myths • Tie the rationale back to the rule • Seek clarification from the entities that put them in place (e.g., HIPAA)
Rules that need redesign	Administrative rules that leaders have the power to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select rules to revise and redesign • Connect with colleagues through the IHI Leadership Alliance or other professional associations/affiliations about how to advance forward
Rules that need advocacy	Rules that are in place due to regulations or policies beyond organizational control	Either independently or through professional networks, use the power of collective voice to engage the appropriate entities and advocate for rules to be changed

What is the IHI Leadership Alliance? The [IHI Leadership Alliance](#), a dynamic collaboration of leaders from health systems across North America, is united by a common mission: to work with one another — and in partnership with our patients, workforces, and communities — to deliver on the full promise of the IHI Triple Aim. The Alliance is a learning community characterized by courage, creativity, and a commitment to champion the [radical redesign of health care](#). Alliance members have access to experts across the country, opportunities to collaborate and innovate with leading thinkers, and a collective voice to guide change for national impact.

Sample Questions

Use the following questions as a guide for how to ask patients, their families, and staff about the rules they would like to break or change.

Original Question:

If you could break or change one rule in service of a better care experience for patients or staff, what would it be and why?

Alternative Options:

- What would you like to see us do differently?
- What would you change to provide a better experience for patients and/or staff at [Name of Organization]?
- What is one wish you would make to deliver better care for patients or staff?
- (For patients/families) Is there anything our organization has done during your stay that has gotten in the way of your family member's care?
- (For patients) What do we do routinely that has made things more challenging for you?

Sample Template

Use the following template to record the rules that patients, their families, and staff would like to break or change. We recommend having one point person on your team collect the information.

Date	Unit/Dept/Team	Employee/Patient/ Relationship to Patient	What Rule Would You Break or Improve?	Why Break or Change This Rule?	Type of Rule
					Rule that needs clarity
					Rule that needs redesign
					Rule that needs advocacy