

Emory Healthcare Policy Review and Consolidation

Institution: Emory University

Summary statement: Identifying the process and technology changes associated with policy governance, creation, review, and approval.

Problem/challenge: Organizational growth has caused a discord among policies, operations and risk. The healthcare environment is ever-changing with increased regulatory pressures and rising costs. Thus, it is necessary to increase focus on effective policy management in order to reflect current operational standards and minimize overall system risk. Our management of policies was decentralized and ineffective. There was a lack of governance structure, broken processes and workflows, fragmented knowledge and training, and inability to easily access policies due to multiple storage locations. Each storage location has its own collection of databases with documents that may be duplicative, misclassified, or hold inaccurate/outdated content. In total there are close to 11,000 policies scattered across the system. The current systems have an impact on organizational performance, cause staff confusion, and prevent clinicians from finding the right policy – occupying time away from clinical care.

Solution/intervention: Emory University's internal consulting group, Business Practice Improvement ("BPI"), launched the EHC Policy Review and Consolidation Project in November 2015. This project will make improvements in policy management around the areas of governance, technology, workflow, training and education, and compliance. The project has three major phases; Phase 0, Phase 1 (with two parts A & B) and Phase 2. During Phase 0 we inventoried policies and assessed the current policy management structure. During Phase 1A we conducted a nationwide benchmarking study to identify best practices in policy management and evaluated technology options to establish a single source of truth (centralized repository) for all document types across the healthcare system - regardless of operating unit, division, or department. We also worked with stakeholders to develop a new governance structure designed to mitigate issues associated with decentralization, local policy ownership and approval. Phase 1B consists of consolidating and cataloging policies. In addition an enterprise-wide change management plan will be developed. The new policy management structure will be implemented in Phase 2.

Key words: policy management, governance, process improvement

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