

Competency Testing Toolkit for Standard Precautions



Purpose: To develop a resource toolkit for Infection Preventionists (IPs) to have access to easy-to-use materials for competency testing for nursing staff in skilled nursing and long-term care facilities. This may be applicable to other departments with adaptation when revised in collaboration with those department supervisors.

Problem/Concern to be addressed: The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requires nursing facilities to have a qualified Infection Preventionist (IP) and implement an effective infection prevention and control program. This program must include competency assessment and training for all staff on relevant infection control practices.

Competency assessments should verify staff can demonstrate the skills and knowledge needed for their specific roles and based on the facility assessment. The training should be designed to ensure staff can demonstrate their competence in performing tasks related to their role and responsibilities. The training must be verified and documented for each staff member annually and as needed.



Please check the current F tag 945 regulations. At the time of this creation, they can be found here Appendix PP starting on page 914.

Key Audience: Infection Preventionists are the primary audience with support from the administration and director of nursing to educate, train, conduct assessment, and track results.

Relevant Background Information: According to the CDC's Core Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Safe Healthcare Delivery in All Settings, "Standard Precautions are the basic practices that apply to all patient care, regardless of the patient's suspected or confirmed infectious state, and apply to all settings where care is delivered. These practices protect healthcare personnel and prevent healthcare personnel or the environment from transmitting infections to other patients." Standard Precautions practices are aimed at preventing the spread of many different types of organisms, not a specific organism.

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CMS defines Standard Precautions in F tag 880 Infection Control as, “infection prevention practices that apply to all residents, regardless of suspected or confirmed diagnosis or presumed infection status. Standard precautions are based on the principle that all blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions except sweat, regardless of whether they contain visible blood, non-intact skin, and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents. Furthermore, equipment or items in the resident’s environment likely to have been contaminated with infectious body fluids must be handled in a manner to prevent transmission of infectious agents.”

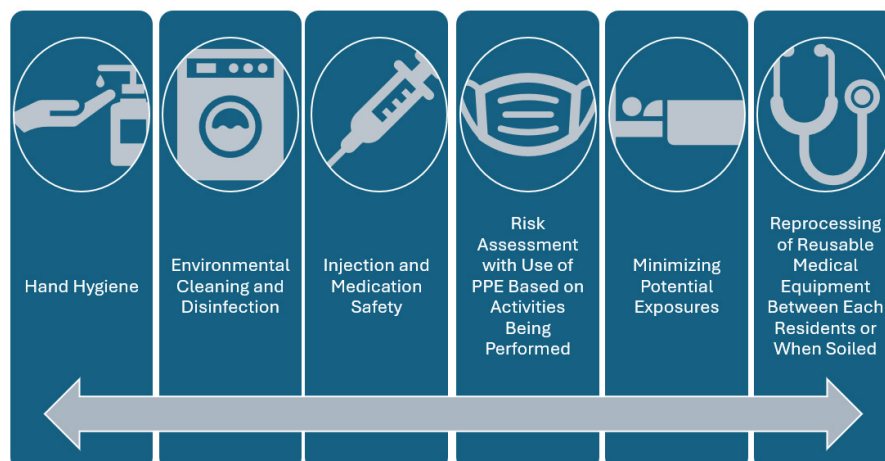
Key Definitions:

Competency-The ability of healthcare staff to use their knowledge, skills, and experience to perform their duties. This can be further expanded to include the level and types of care needed for the resident population.

Competency Assessment- Process used to ensure that healthcare staff are meeting their duties as required by federal regulation.

Standard Precautions- Per the CDC’s Core Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Safe Healthcare Delivery in All Settings, these include:

- Hand hygiene
- Environmental cleaning and disinfection, including laundry and linen
- Injection and medication safety
- Risk assessment with use of appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., gloves, gowns, face masks) based on activities being performed
- Minimizing Potential Exposures (e.g. respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, source control, patient placement)
- Reprocessing of reusable medical equipment between each resident or when soiled



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What is a Competency Skills Fair? A competency skills fair is an educational event that provides training (demonstration and return demonstration) on best practices and usually involves multiple booths, tables, or nursing skills stations.

1. Get approval for the competency skills fair-meet with facility leadership to discuss the need for the fair, expectations, location, and monetary requirements (treats, rewards, supplies).
2. Partner with “sister” facilities or network with other nearby facilities if available. Partnering with another IP(s) spreads the work out, generates new ideas and methods, and increases enjoyment and networking skills.
3. Determine skills to be tested
 - a. Review annual or complaint surveys for any skills that were found to be deficient in practice.
 - b. Review process monitoring results for areas of concern identified.
 - c. New equipment or supplies.
4. Determine dates and times – various days of the week and times of day should be considered so that the fair is available and accessible to staff working different shifts.
 - a. Advertisement – posters, discussion at huddles, morning meetings.
 - b. Have staff sign-up for designated times (avoids staff coming at same time).
 - c. Match names of those who participate with a list from HR or DON, so staff members are not missed.
 - d. If working with another facility – allow staff members who miss participating at “home” facility to attend “sister” facility, with approval.
 - e. Consider scheduling “make-up” day(s).
 - f. Create signage to let the residents and families know about the events, so they are aware.
5. Give it a theme. Skills fairs lend themselves well to creative themes. Here are some to consider- holiday(s) during the month of the fair, popular movie(s), and seasons of the year.
6. Develop an evidence-based competency checklist. Checklists should be based on nursing textbook procedures, manufacturer’s instructions for use, CDC, facility policy, and procedures. Ensure policy and procedures align with current facility practices.
 - a. Useful resources for pre-developed competency checklists-NC SPICE, CDC.
 - b. If developing a checklist, be sure it contains the following elements:
 - i. Name and title of staff member

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What is a Competency Skills Fair? (cont.)

- b. If developing a checklist, be sure it contains the following elements:
 - i. Name and title of staff member
 - ii. Date
 - iii. Name of skill tested
 - iv. Steps of the skill the staff member must perform
 - v. Determination if performance of skill was deemed to be correct. If not correct, document retraining or new education and retest.
 - vi. Signature and title of the person who determined competence.
 - c. Adapt materials and language to cater to diverse resident and staff populations as reflected in your facility assessment.
 7. Determine “experts” - Those determining competence must have documented competency in the procedure themselves.
 - a. Invite vendors to set up booths-many have skill activities to provide. Be sure to review what will be presented by the vendor to be sure it is aligned with your facility policy, procedures, and expectations.
 - b. Utilize shift coaches or other star performers to assist. Document their competency in the skill and in assessing others. This is a great way to recognize staff who are willing and able to take on some basic leadership tasks.
 8. Determine what equipment and supplies are needed for each skill to be performed.
 - a. If coordinating with other facilities, determine what each facility is responsible for providing.
 - b. Re-use supplies (if applicable) between demonstrations.
 - i. Clean and disinfect between use.
 - c. If there is a need for a manikin that can “travel”, have it available.
 - i. Check on local availability of mannequins (emergency providers - ambulance, schools of nursing) to borrow.
 9. Determine the space to be used - Decorate the space, if desired.
 - a. If an unoccupied resident room is available, consider for use.
 - i. Develop scenarios for different skills (i.e., residents are coughing – what will you do?).
 - b. If not using a resident room, be sure the space you choose is large enough for stations, equipment, and staff.

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What is a Competency Skills Fair? (cont.)

- i. Set up a number of stations, each focused on one topic, such as hand hygiene, PPE donning and doffing, or use of sharps devices.
- c. Have expert(s) available at each station/in resident room who can provide a brief introduction to the skill (what it is, why it is done) and demonstrate the skill.
 - i. Have the staff perform a return demonstration of the skill before they can move to the next station.
 - ii. Expert to observe staff performance and document completion.
- Successful completion is determined by the staff member correctly performing each step on the checklist.
- If the staff member does not complete each step correctly, the staff member must receive re-education and perform the skill again.
 - iii. Move the staff around the fair in small groups, each at different stations so the experts can have the ability to fully interact with each group.
 - iv. Consider if you need someone “on standby” to help with any remediations at the time of the fair rather than waiting until later.
- 10. Provide rewards and treats at the end of the session as determined by your facility (e.g. candy, baked goods, food).
 - a. Consider holding a raffle – purchase items such as gift cards or scratch-off tickets, or cash to reward staff members that completed all required skills and the evaluation.
- 11. If you are combining departments, determine if you want individual departments grouped or interdisciplinary groups.
 - a. Consider dedicating sessions to different departments, so each participant is comfortable in their groups.
 - b. If increasing interdisciplinary interactions a goal, and you want to encourage mixed groups.
- 12. Thank staff members for participating. Some methods may include:
 - a. In person
 - b. In a newsletter “shout out to all staff members, thank you for attending the skills fair. Your attendance made it a great success!”
 - c. Special recognition for people who serve as experts from the staff.
 - c. Ask staff who are high level performers if they would serve as “experts” at future competency fairs.

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What is a Competency Skills Fair? (cont.)

13. Evaluations – ask staff attending to complete a brief evaluation of the skills fair before they leave. Have staff suggest skills or ideas to enhance future fairs.

Available Documents For Competency Fair

Please note- these are examples and can be adapted as needed to fit your facility requirements and culture. Tailor these to meet your needs after you download them.

Master Documents for IP tracking

Standard Precaution Station Testing Supplies Master List
Standard Precautions Competency Fair Master Checklist Per Participant
Standard Precautions Staff Completion Tracking Spreadsheet
Standard Precautions Competency Certificate

Engage and Communicate Samples

Template for email communication for staff and residents/families
Sample Flyer (be creative!)

Standard Precaution Stations

Folders for each station contain at a minimum: Implementation Guide, quiz, and competency checklist (*do not have a demonstration of competency). Additionally, most contain educational materials, handouts, and other supplemental materials.

- Hand Hygiene
- Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection (includes laundry and linen)
- Injection and Medication Safety
- Risk Assessment With Use of Appropriate PPE Based on Activities Being Performed
- Minimize Potential Exposures (includes Respiratory and Cough Etiquette and Resident Placement)
- Reprocessing of Reusable Medical Equipment Between Each Patient or When Soiled

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Additional Resources:

CDC's Core Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Safe Healthcare Delivery in All Settings

AHRQ-A Unit Guide to Infection Prevention For Long-Term Care Staff

Alabama Health Care Association Infection Prevention and Control Educational Modules Infection Prevention & Control Course - free toolkits (with registration) on antibiotic stewardship, enhanced barrier precautions, environmental cleaning, hand hygiene, indoor air quality, and managing outbreaks.

CMP Developed CNA Competency Documents (questionnaires)

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). (2025). State Operations Manual Appendix PP. Retrieved August 1, 2025, Appendix PP-F tag 880 Infection Control

[The Basics of Infection Prevention Training Video for All Staff](#) presented by SPICE and North Carolina Public Health