Daily or Weekly Huddle Job Aid

This tool is designed to help management staff or team leads at sexual and reproductive health agencies strengthen relationships within their teams by facilitating a routine team-building "huddle."

What is a huddle?

A huddle is a short team meeting with the specific purpose of coordinating work by providing an opportunity for team members to request and offer help.

What are the benefits of huddling?

In addition to improving coordination, sharing task assignments and struggles increases team members' situational awareness. This allows staff to respond more effectively to unexpected events or demands. Another benefit is improved team cohesion as staff members come to better appreciate each other's contributions and experiences.

Is it better to huddle daily or weekly?

The frequency of the huddle depends on the variability of the work and the staff performing the work. In a clinic with many part-time staff members, and where the team roles and workload vary day-to-day, a daily huddle is best. In a back-office environment where staffing, roles, and workload may be more consistent, a weekly huddle is probably sufficient. Huddle frequency can increase or decrease as needs change.

Does the huddle need to be in the morning?

There is no hard and fast rule. In many clinical environments, huddles typically occur at the beginning of the shift. The few minutes before the first appointment may be the only opportunity to get everyone together. It's also better to know who needs help *before* they need it. If your team huddles in the morning, the huddle can be combined with the morning check-in. For weekly huddles, Monday morning or early afternoon timing may give team members an opportunity to prepare for the week, to identify help they might need, or to share alerts (e.g., equipment issues, staff out sick) with the team.

Who should attend the huddle?

The huddle should include the people who immediately depend on one another to accomplish their day-to-day work. In theory that could include everyone in an organization, but more practically includes all members of a specific department or office subgroup. For a very small clinic with one or two providers, however, including clerical and clinical staff in the same huddle can greatly benefit workflow and team cohesion.

Should every department do a huddle?

While every department can benefit from huddling, it's best to start small with one or two huddles, e.g., a clinical huddle and a billing team huddle. Consider these your "pilot projects."

Piloting huddles will give you the chance to assess whether huddling is a good fit for your organization, and to learn what tweaks might make huddling most effective for *your* team. You may decide to huddle twice per week, or you may discover that team members don't like the word "huddle" and together come up with something new.

After running a pilot huddle for a month or two, assess the feedback and share your experience with other department leaders. People are more open to a new idea if they know it has already worked in your specific organization, *and* if they have some say in how and when they implement huddles.

How to huddle

1. Gather the staff in a room or hallway where everyone can easily be seen and heard.

2. Begin with any announcements.

3. Next, shift the focus to the staff. Depending upon the nature of the work, ask about:

   a. Each person's role/assignment/task for the day or week?

   b. Any anticipated challenges, e.g., first time doing a task; heavier than normal workload; a particularly difficult client situation?

   c. Any requests for help?

   d. Any offers of help? *(If help is requested and no one offers, the team leader should assign the helper.)*

4. End the huddle with an encouraging comment, high five, fist bump, or "go team!"

5. Post any challenges that staff identify on an Improvement Board. Work as a team to identify actionable solutions and to track progress.

Mix it up!

Here are a few ideas to keep the huddle from becoming a stale routine. Play with different options to determine the best fit for your team.

- Facilitate a rapid-fire ice breaker like "movie ball," during which one participant bounces a ball to somebody else in the circle after saying the name of a movie. The group continues to bounce the ball around the circle. A person is out of the game if they repeat a movie name or fail to say a name within the five-second time limit. Eventually there is a competition between two people for the winner!

- Play music through the overhead speakers to signal the start of the huddle. Change up the artist and music style; let different staff members choose the songs.

- Sing "Happy Birthday" to team members on their birthdays.

- Ask about and celebrate other accomplishments and milestones, e.g., engagements, weddings, anniversaries, children's graduations, and certifications and degree completions.

- Launch with fun facts, e.g., "The oldest-known living land animal is a tortoise named Jonathan, who is 187 years old. He was born in 1832 and has lived on the island of St. Helena in the Atlantic Ocean since 1882" (guinnessworldrecords.com); "The original name for the search engine Google was Backrub. It was renamed Google after the googol, which is the number one followed by 100 zeros" (about.google). Do your own web search for fun facts that might appeal to your team!

- Play a song as the huddle breaks up and people return to their respective work stations.