



PATIENT SAFETY TOOL BOX TALKS ©

LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

MANAGING INCIDENTS

SUPPORTING STAFF FOLLOWING AN ADVERSE EVENT: THE "ASSIST ME" MODEL



v1.0

The "ASSIST ME" model of staff support

The importance of support for staff from line managers, colleagues and peers in the aftermath of an adverse event should not be underestimated. Being available for staff and knowing his/her story surrounding the event is crucial. Staff require a safe and confidential space in which to discuss the event and can find this therapeutic.

The "ASSIST ME" model of staff support has been developed to assist managers and staff during this process. This has been adapted by the HSE from the Medical Protection Society's A.S.S.I.S.T model of communicating with service users following adverse events in healthcare.

- A** **Acknowledge** with empathy the event and the impact on the member of staff
- Assess** the impact of the event on the member of staff and on their ability to continue normal duties

Examples: "I came to see you as soon as I heard what happened. This must be very difficult for you", "How are you doing?, How are you coping?, How are you feeling?"

- S** **Sorry** - express regret for their experience

Examples: "I am so sorry that this has happened", "Sometimes despite our best efforts things can go wrong/ errors can occur"

- S** **Story** - allow time and space for them to recount what happened using active listening skills.
- Share** personal experience

Examples: "Can I tell you about an experience of my own, how I felt and what I found helped me at that time?", "You may find helpful to talk about what happened. Would you like to talk about your experience/what has happened?"

- I** **Inquire** - encourage questions
- Information** - provide answers/information

Examples: "Do you have any questions?, Is there anything I can help you with at this time?, Would it help if I told you what happens next and what can you expect in relation to the processes involved in the management of this event?"

- S** **Supports and Solutions**

Examples: Provide information on the supports available.

(a) Formal emotional support:

- Provide information on debriefing and the benefits of the same
- Organise, with the consent of the staff member, one to one or team debriefing within 24-48 hours of the event occurring.
- Provide information on the other supports available via the Occupational Health Department/Employee Assistance Programme/Mental Health Services/Psychology Services: i.e. counselling, crisis intervention.
- Assess any immediate needs, discuss with the member of staff and arrange, with their knowledge and consent, a referral to the relevant support services, as required.
- Provide the name and contact details for their designated staff support person and arrange contact.
- Provide staff support information leaflets/brochures.

(b) Informal emotional support: *“My door is open for you at all times. I will be checking in with you regularly to see how you are doing. In the meantime if you do wish to talk about this or discuss anything with me please come and see me or give me a call at any time. Can I arrange for someone to collect you from work?”*

(c) Practical Support:

- Provide an opportunity for the member of staff to take time out from their clinical duties, if required. Staff should be involved in and have input to any decision made regarding the same. Many staff find it more helpful to remain at work. Allocation to different duties may benefit initially if it is practical to do so.
- Provide practical support and information in relation to the review/ investigation process and how the staff member might assist/contribute to this process. e.g. encourage the member of staff to write up their recollection of the event as soon as possible for their own record. Ensure that they are kept updated and involved in the review/open disclosure process.
- Provide information and support in relation to communicating with the service user following the event/ preparing for open disclosure discussions.
- Ensure that they are encouraged to provide their insight into the prevention of a recurrence of the event.
- Establish the learning from the event, at individual and organisational level and support going forward.

T **Travel** - providing continued support and reassurance going forward and throughout the investigation/review process and *open disclosure* process.

Examples: *“I am here to support you going forward”, “I will be with you every step of the way and I will assist you in any way I can”*

M **Maintain** contact
Monitor progress
Moving forward

Examples: Ensure that there is continued contact with the staff member to prevent feelings of isolation. Continually monitor and assess the staff members response to the event and their response to any interventions. Provide guidance and support on their return to normal duties.

E **End** - reaching a stage of closure from the event
Evaluate

Examples: Establish when the staff member has reached a stage of closure from the event as it is important at this stage not to keep re-opening the event with them. Leave your door open to them if they should require any further assistance going forward. Review the support provided with the staff member involved. Consider feedback and establish any learning which may benefit other staff.

