

Abstract: Pebbles In Your Shoe: Initiating SBAR as a Team Communication Tool

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Background: Within our organization, most departments practice management/labor collaboration through Unit Based Teams (UBTs). Our UBT includes 8-10 elected representatives meeting biweekly to discuss the unique challenges of our 80+ employee department. Prioritization of patient care frequently prevents non-elected staff from attending. Thus, an open-ended “Pebbles In Your Shoe” form was posted for staff to identify department concerns. The feedback received was often vague without identifying root issues. Public posting sometimes led to written altercations, preventing others from utilizing the tool.

Purpose: The UBT needed an improved communication tool to encourage productive feedback. They wanted staff to feel safe, heard, and valued while also encouraging staff to think critically and suggest solutions to their concerns.

Methods: During a class, a UBT co-lead learned about Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation (SBAR) format. The UBT decided to revitalize the Pebbles in Your Shoe form utilizing SBAR as a standardized format. A lock box was purchased to increase confidentiality and create an environment of safety to speak up.

Results: This change has resulted in a vast increase in thorough, actionable staff feedback. Projects prompted by the new format have included creation of a facilitator role resulting in cost savings of \$900,000/year, problem solving safety hazards, and advocating for the return of support services to the unit. Pebbles are now a primary source of positive change in our department. Additionally, measures of staff engagement on an annual survey demonstrated a statistically significant 22% increase in staff believing that their ideas are heard and implemented.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The SBAR format is a powerful communication tool for our team, increasing actionable feedback and decreasing conflict. It helps us leverage our greatest asset, our staff’s knowledge and experience, to improve patient care and staff satisfaction. Our team unequivocally recommends SBAR as an effective team communication tool.