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Behavior-based safety action plans: Four types

Behavior-based safety is only as effective as the data it generates and uses. The following questions can create or fine-tune observation and data analysis strategies and lay the foundation for four types of effective and efficient action plans.

Is your data quantity adequate? Are you regularly meeting your goal for desired number of people observed? If yes, the process moves to the next question. If not, enact Action Plan 1: Increase the number of observations. Some strategies to implement this action plan could be: sharing data with observers to help them understand its use and importance; reviewing your observation strategy (number of observers and observations, etc.); using back-up or reserve observers to cover when regular observers are unable; setting reminders for observers; retraining for observers who are not accomplishing their target numbers of observations; stressing the importance of adequate sample for trends and why this process is so important; posting data on targets and actual observations; pairing observers into teams to support and encourage each other; utilizing blitz observations; creating regular reminders of commitment and performance; rewarding and/or celebrating when targets are reached.

Is your data quality adequate? If you have enough data, how is the quality? Is the checklist completed with all the variables including the reasons why precautionary behaviors are not being performed? If yes, the process moves to the next question. If not, enact Action Plan 2: Improve the quality of observation data. Some strategies to implement this action plan could be: giving regular feedback to observers on quality of data; partnering observers with team members to help improve quality; partnering observers who are having difficulty with stronger-performing observers; training or retraining on observation data details and methodology; reviewing data in observer meetings; showing examples of what a complete, well-filled-out checklist looks like; adding checkboxes or categories to checklists as prompts.

Can you prioritize and select a behavior? Are you already focusing on a single or small group of behaviors to make the biggest impact based on observation data? If yes, the process moves to the next question. If not, look at secondary criteria (time of day, day of week, tenure of person observed, shift, department, weather, etc.) to drive focus for improvement. When the opportunity is realized, the process moves on.

Can you identify influence? If not, enact Action Plan 3: Gather better data on reason for concern. Some strategies to implement this action plan could be: asking observers to focus on the targeted behavior; looking for the influencer everywhere; asking about it even when the behavior isn't observed; targeting areas or jobs where you have historically had the most of this type of incident; asking everyone for ideas to solve the problem; involving workers and observers as problem solvers.

If the influence can be identified, enact Action Plan 4: Address influences on risks. Some strategies to implement this action plan for perception influences could be: training; reading articles or toolbox talks in safety meetings; helping managers and supervisors to reinforce and coach; stressing the influence in incident reports; adding the influence to new employee orientation. For habitual influences, some strategies could be: increasing the number and frequency of observations in target areas; placing signage about the behavior; having reminders in safety and other meetings. For obstacle and barrier influences, some strategies could be: identifying the issue from incident and observation data; defining the potential impact of inaction; asking for help from those with a larger budget.

Consider leveraging this methodology and ensure your data collection and analysis strategy focuses on efficiency and capturing and delivering value to the customers of the process.

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