



Shift to Shift Communication

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure effective, standardized communication between laboratory staff during shift changes. Reliable communication at shift transitions helps maintain patient safety, testing accuracy, operational efficiency, and a consistent workflow throughout the day.

Policy Statements

All staff members are responsible for effective communication at the change of shift. Clear and consistent exchange of information between incoming and outgoing personnel is essential to maintain patient safety and operational continuity.

Content of Communication

Staff beginning their shift must report to their assigned area and take report from the individuals they are relieving and/or attend designated huddles.

The following items must be communicated during shift handoff:

- Critical patients
- Status of pending lab reports (pending logs must be passed on to the next shift, including notes and actions taken)
- Irretrievable sample issues (e.g., CSF, tissue)
- Instrument or computer issues
- Inventory concerns
- Status of incomplete non-patient work (e.g., maintenance, QC, calibration)
- Staffing concerns (e.g., unexpected absences)
- Phlebotomy status/handoffs

Standard Communication Format

The following structured format should be used to ensure completeness and clarity:

SBAR Communication Tool (Orange Form):

- **S – Situation:** Clearly and briefly define the situation. Include what the problem is, where and when it started, and its severity.
- **B – Background:** Provide relevant background information. Include patient identifiers (name, MRN, DOB), accession numbers, times, reference numbers, people involved, and any other pertinent details.
- **A – Assessment:** Describe your evaluation of the issue

- **R – Recommendation:** Propose steps to address the situation, including any actions already taken and follow-up needed.

Example SBAR for CSF Sample Missing Orders:

- **S – Situation:** There is a CSF sample in the refrigerator for patient Lastname, Firstname; MRN 012345; DOB 01/01/2019. We are waiting for Dr. Happy to place orders.
- **B – Background:** I have made two phone calls (at 1300 and 1330) to the ordering provider/unit and left a message with Nurse Betty indicating that lab orders are needed.
- **A – Assessment:** The sample needs to be processed and run within the next hour.
- **R – Recommendation:** Call the unit again if no response is received within 15 minutes.

Note: Completed SBAR forms are stored: SharePoint/Lab/Lab General/SBAR forms MPLS or STP (campus dependent)

Supporting Documents

[Shift to Shift Communication form GL 1.10.f1](#)

Historical Record

Version	Author	Effective Date	Summary
1	J. Heimkes	08/15/2007	Initial Version
2	J. Heimkes & B. Kochevar	07/12/2012	Updated format and staff responsibilities
3	Jennifer Heimkes	07/07/2017	Added Groupwise and updated logo
4	Jennifer Heimkes	04/22/2019	Updated content to define types of critical communication handoff. Added SBAR format and form link.
5	Jennifer Heimkes	01/12/2022	Added in huddle. Clarified purpose.
6	Jennifer Larson-Kelso	07/11/2025	Updated format/template and wording.