



Coaching for Success: The Power of Checklists

Elvira Beracochea, MD. MPH.

“How can I help my staff to meet quality standards consistently every day?” I understand you want every clinic staff to provide the same quality services to every patient every day. There is one easy thing you can do to help improve the consistency of your staff’s performance: use checklists. Checklists

help train, mentor and evaluate performance. They are also useful job aides to remind us of the standards and processes we need to follow when we see a patient, and they also keep us accountable for our performance.

There are three steps to create and use checklists. First you decide on the minimum standards to be met; second, you prepare the checklist; and third you demonstrate and train. Use the norms of your Ministry of Health or approved by WHO or other source of information on best practices to create your checklist. Here is an example:

1. **Define the standard:** every pregnant mother will have a birth plan.
2. **Prepare a checklist:** write down on pocket-size card the steps to follow.
 - a. Greet the mother.
 - b. Find out the estimated date of delivery.
 - c. Confirm this date to the mother and help her write it down.
 - d. Ask where she plans to deliver her baby.
 - e. If she is going to deliver at home,
 - i. Ask her who will help her deliver her baby.
 - ii. Ask the mother to list the five things she needs to have ready for the birth: clean cloth to lie on, soap for attendant to wash hands, clean ties to tie the cord, clean blades to cut the cord, and clean cloth to wrap baby and keep it warm.
 - f. Ask what signs of problem or emergency she knows: fever, sudden pain, or bleeding.
 - g. Ask where the mother will go in case she has those signs.
 - h. Ask the mother who will help her go there and whether she can save to pay for emergency transportation, if necessary.
 - i. Congratulate the mother on having a good plan at every step or help the mother to figure out each step of the plan.
 - j. Give her a lot of praise for her efforts and follow up with her husband or other family member that they are aware of the plan.
3. **Demonstrate** how you do it and have your staff follow the checklist. Then reverse roles and you observe while your staff does it. Repeat as necessary. When you give feedback, note everything the staff did right every time, and pick only one thing that needs improvement.

Now prepare a checklist for your clinic and send it to me. I will choose one to share in next month’s newsletter!

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Innovations shares the international experience of Dr. Elvira Beracochea and the MIDEGO team. If you have a question about how to improve healthcare or comments on this month’s newsletter, please write to Dr. Elvira Beracochea at elvira@midego.com.

About Dr. Elvira

Dr. Elvira Beracochea is an international public health consultant. Elvira coaches health workers to innovate and improve the quality of health services. She is the founder, President and CEO of MIDEGO, Inc.

About MIDEGO, Inc.

MIDEGO is committed to be a global partner in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and improving quality of life. **Our mission** is to assist you and your organization to improve health care and reach the MDGs, one day - one percent at a time. **Our vision** is to help provide quality healthcare for everyone everywhere every day.

Contact Information

MIDEGO, Inc
4710 Olley Lane
Fairfax VA 22032
USA
www.midego.com
Phone: 703-978-3331
Fax: 703-991-8293

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