



# COMPLIANCE E-NEWS

*This issue of Compliance E-News features a recent article from the Health Care Compliance Association. It was published for general circulation to help members communicate the value and purpose of compliance and ethics to the general workforce.*

## TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES

Organizational codes of conduct are adopted to support employees in adhering to honest and ethical workplace behaviors. Serious consequences can result when individuals fail to comply with the code of conduct and the organization's written standards, policies, and procedures.

**Compliance is a choice.** We can choose to comply because we understand that it benefits us and others, or we can choose not to comply and reap the consequences. No one likes a lot of rules, but the rules have been established to protect us all. On some occasions, individuals may unintentionally fail to comply. Sometimes that happens because of poor communications regarding written standards, inaccessible written standards, or other failures regarding review practices. People do make mistakes, but the goal is to limit the number of mistakes through good communication and good documentation of processes.

**Non-compliance has its costs.** Regardless of the reason, intentional or not, serious consequences can affect the individual who carries out the service, the recipients of the service, and the organization responsible for oversight of the service area.

The consequences are not always drastic when an individual chooses not to comply or an individual makes an error in the process, but in some situations, people have lost their jobs, received fines, and/or gone to jail. Organizations also reap consequences when employees fail to comply. We have all seen and heard stories about individuals and organizations that have encountered these situations.

**Tools are available to help us get things right.** An organization's written standards of conduct, policies, procedures, and guidelines are some of the tools that support compliant processes. Checklists are additional tools that can help guide us in a step-by-step fashion to comply with procedures. Checklists come in various forms, but they typically accompany a procedure. Used properly, checklists are considered "controls" because they help users verify each step, thereby limiting the potential risk of error within that process.

**We are all responsible for compliance.** The work we complete and how we complete it matters. Busy schedules and deadlines can make shortcuts seem appealing. It's important to evaluate and consider how we would want others to provide a service to us. The aviation industry and the Armed Forces drill on the importance of consistently using checklists to conduct their activities. Would you want your pilot to skip using a required checklist and take a shortcut or two because he/she is in a hurry? It certainly wouldn't be the right thing to do for the passengers. We need to complete processes correctly because it's the right thing to do—not only for ourselves, but for the individuals we are providing a service to and for our organizations.

