

TipSheet for the Use of IPAC Champions in Long-Term Care Homes

What are IPAC Champions?

Infection prevention and control (IPAC) Champions are staff or volunteers who act as role models by supporting good IPAC practices in your long-term care setting. IPAC Champions can perform a variety of duties to support the IPAC program, including:

- Providing formal or informal education, peer-to-peer coaching or on-the spot feedback for staff
- Assisting in audits, including hand hygiene monitoring and PPE audits
- Raising concerns to the IPAC lead about common IPAC issues or challenges staff are experiencing in the setting

What are the Benefits of Implementing IPAC Champions in Long-Term Care?

IPAC Champions can help facilitate and disseminate knowledge, monitor compliance and flag IPAC concerns in your setting. By recruiting IPAC Champions that represent both management and frontline staff, IPAC can become increasingly integrated into organizational culture, which can in turn help with communication, understanding, acceptance and compliance (1). IPAC Champions' presence alone can also act as a simple reminder to staff about the importance of practicing good infection prevention and control measures.

Creating IPAC Champion roles, particularly those that assist in duties such as auditing, can also alleviate some of the IPAC Lead's workload and allow them to re-direct their time to other important IPAC activities.

Recruiting and Celebrating IPAC Champions

IPAC Champions may include managers and supervisors, frontline staff such as PSWs and nurses, representatives from key departments that regularly collaborate with IPAC (e.g., Environmental Services), as well as general volunteers. IPAC Leads may choose to select specific individuals to act as IPAC Champions or consider conducting a callout for volunteers. IPAC Leads may also create short-term Champion roles for modified workers (see *Appendix A*).

Refer to the attached "*Callout Poster_IPAC Champions needed!*" to assist with communications when recruiting new IPAC Champions.

Consider implementing regular recruitment campaigns to ensure an adequate number of Champions (e.g., bi-annually); IPAC Leads may also consider conducting a recruitment blitz during the annual IPAC Awareness Week.

Other helpful incentives for recruiting Champions may include:

- Providing protected education time during work hours, or paid education/courses during non-work hours
- Providing a dedicated workspace to assist with IPAC-related work
- Professional development opportunities such as offering a position on the inter-disciplinary team, or the opportunity to co-present data at the quarterly IPAC Committee meetings, Family or Resident Council, or Joint Health and Safety Committee

IPAC Leads should also consider the following when recruiting Champions (2):

- Choose individuals who are well-respected and who staff may look up to for direction or advice
- Champions should be good communicators, team-orientated and comfortable approaching other staff about IPAC topics
- Champions should be enthusiastic about IPAC and dedicated to ensuring best practice in your setting
- Champions should be early adopters of change and open to new ideas

IPAC Leads should consider ways to publicly celebrate their IPAC Champions and acknowledge their important work. For example, consider dedicating a section of your IPAC awareness/education board to thank Champions or acknowledging them in a newsletter, at IPAC Committee meetings, during IPAC Awareness Week, etc. Often, simple yet meaningful efforts to sincerely thank individuals for their dedication and hard work can be one of the most effective ways in helping them feel appreciated.

Training IPAC Champions

IPAC Leads must ensure proper training and education is offered for all IPAC Champions, and that regular education refreshers are provided. When training a new Champion, IPAC Leads should begin with reviewing their home's internal IPAC policies and procedures.

The IPAC Lead may require Champions to complete internal education requirements (e.g., via Surge Learning) or use external resources, such as learning modules from Public Health Ontario. Please see the *Additional Resources* section below for education materials IPAC Leads may consider when training Champions.

Depending on the duties IPAC Leads are assigning to Champions, targeted training and education may be required. For example, if Champions are assisting with hand hygiene auditing, training should at least cover the following:

- The importance of hand hygiene in long-term care and why auditing is beneficial
- Your home's specific policies and procedures for hand hygiene practices
- The 4 moments of hand hygiene
- Proper technique for ABHR and washing with soap and water
- An overview of the auditing tool that Champions will use (e.g., paper-based or electronic)
- Dedicated time to practice auditing with the IPAC Lead to ensure Champions understand the expectations, are comfortable using the tool and can ask any questions to the Lead
- Opportunities to test inter-rater reliability (see section below for details)
- Training on effective communication and strategies for providing on-the-spot feedback to staff

Inter-Rater Reliability for IPAC Champions Supporting Auditing Activities

It is best practice to ensure inter-rater reliability when using IPAC Champions to support hand hygiene or PPE auditing. Auditing results could be skewed if multiple auditors are recording results differently from one another, so regularly monitoring the inter-rater reliability between auditors can help ensure that data being collected is accurate.

It is also important to ensure that Champions understand how biases can impact data collection. IPAC Leads should explain that data being collected for audits is anonymous, therefore Champions shouldn't feel that they are "getting their colleagues in trouble" if reporting improper IPAC practices during audits. Champions should understand that their colleagues will not be singled-out as a result of audits, and that accurate results will help the IPAC Lead identify areas for improvement and education needs for the home as a whole.

Training and regular education refreshers are a helpful way to ensure inter-rater reliability for Champions supporting auditing activities.

Determining Inter-Rater Reliability – Percentage Agreement and Cohen's Kappa

To ensure inter-rater reliability, have two auditors (one of them being the IPAC Lead) monitor the same events, individually record their own audit results, and then compare the amount of agreement or disagreement between the recorded observations. Inter-rater reliability measures will be more accurate with a greater number of observations that are collected.

Percentage agreement refers to the number of observations that both the IPAC Lead and IPAC Champion both recorded as either "complied" or "missed", divided by the total number of observations recorded. This is a simple method to check inter-rater reliability.

Calculating a Cohen's Kappa Statistic can be another method to measuring inter-rater reliability. It differs from percent agreement because it takes into account that two observers may agree on an observation by random chance. Cohen's Kappa is calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{observed agreement} - \text{chance agreement}}{1 - \text{chance agreement}}$$

You can use the table below to help interpret your kappa value and determine the level of agreement.

Kappa Value	Level of Agreement
0-0.4	Poor
0.41-0.75	Moderate to good
>0.75	Excellent
1.0	Perfect

It is important to note that Kappa as a measure of agreement has some limitations, particularly when only a small number of observations are being compared. IPAC Leads should consider both percent agreement and Kappa when comparing an IPAC Champion's auditing observations to their own. For example, if the IPAC Lead and IPAC Champion agree on 85% of the observations, but the Kappa value only corresponds to "moderate" agreement, the IPAC Lead should consider both those values, as well as the complexity of observations that were recorded and any other relevant factors to determine if the IPAC Champion has a strong understanding of the process being audited and the auditing tool being used.

Refer to the attached Excel tool "*Calculating Inter-Rater Reliability_IPAC Champions & Auditing*" to calculate percent agreement and Kappa when training IPAC Champions.

On-The Spot Feedback

If IPAC Champions are providing on-the-spot feedback to staff (e.g., when auditing), it is important to approach the staff member in a positive and respectful manner. Champions may ask if the staff would like feedback on his/her IPAC practices or pass along a gentle reminder about best practices. Feedback should not be judgmental or punitive; Champions should reiterate that staff are appreciated and that their hard work is valued.

The IPAC Lead can introduce the IPAC Champion to several different approaches to effectively provide feedback on IPAC practices. For example, the “feedback sandwich” approach provides positive feedback first, followed by suggestions on areas of improvement, and then closes the discussion with another strength or noting appreciation for the staff’s efforts (3). Another strategy is the “chronological fashion” approach, in which Champions can walk staff through their observed IPAC practices in chronological order and highlight strengths and areas for improvement throughout the discussion (3). A third approach to providing feedback is using the “Pendleton model”, in which Champions use prompts and questions to facilitate discussion with staff (3). This approach is more learner-focused and conversation-based, but staff first need to be ready and open for feedback. Champions can then use questions to facilitate the discussion and identify a plan of action for improvement.

Sample on-the-spot feedback have been provided below (4):

- **Feedback Sandwich:** *“I notice that you do a great job cleaning your hands when you leave a patient’s room. Healthcare environments can be very contaminated, so it is important to protect the patient by cleaning your hands before you touch them as well. Patients really like to see healthcare personnel using alcohol-based hand sanitizer before they touch them. Keep up the good work on that last moment of hand hygiene before you leave the room! I appreciate all the of the hard work you’re doing for our patients.”*
- **Chronological Fashion:** *“The first thing you did really well was use alcohol-based hand sanitizer upon entering the room. You then went on to check the patient’s blood pressure and administer their medications, doing a great job to communicate with them on what you were doing. You got really focused on maintaining a sterile field for their port dressing change, and you began prepping the materials, but you had not cleaned your hands at this point. When I quietly gestured to the sanitizer dispenser, you stopped what you were doing, performed hand hygiene, and began the aseptic procedure over again. That was the appropriate way to handle that. Recognizing when hand hygiene should be done requires mindfulness between tasks. When your patients see you do hand hygiene, they know you are committed to their safety. Thank you for keeping our patients safe.”*
- **Pendleton Model:** *“Thanks for speaking with me. I am conducting hand hygiene observations on the floor today and I wanted to talk through the hand hygiene moments that I just observed. What do you think went well? What do you think could have been done differently? What could be further improved? How can we achieve that?”*

It will be important for Champions to recognize that on-the-spot feedback needs to be appropriate for that moment in time, for example, it would not be appropriate to provide on-the-spot feedback in an active emergency situation. IPAC Leads should also note to Champions that there may be some tension or conflict from staff when it comes to receiving constructive criticism. IPAC Leads should provide appropriate training and resources for IPAC Champions so they feel confident in addressing any tension

or resistance they face when providing feedback to staff (e.g., require Champions to complete conflict resolution training modules in advance of auditing activities).

Mitigating Barriers and Offering Continued Support to IPAC Champions

Addressing common barriers for IPAC Champions can help ensure a long-term and successful program. IPAC Leads may consider the following (5):

- **Time:** Competing priorities can limit the amount of time IPAC Champions can dedicate to their role. The IPAC Lead should consider ways to allocate a dedicated amount of time for Champions during their shift to complete their IPAC activities (e.g., auditing). Refer to the attached “*Sample Staff Audit Schedule_IPAC Champions*” document for an example staff auditing schedule that may be used to inform these activities during outbreak and non-outbreak periods.
- **Sustainability:** A common challenge with implementing IPAC Champions programming is long-term sustainability. IPAC Leads should ensure a minimum number of Champions are recruited to the program to withstand changes to staffing, and continuously recruit for the role where there is staff turnover. In addition, IPAC Leads may need to communicate with regular memos/reminders, particularly at the beginning of the implementation phase, to ensure Champions are regularly conducting their IPAC duties. Regular one-on-one check in’s and/or group meetings with IPAC Champions are also an important way to understand areas of success with the program, as well as challenges that may need to be addressed.
- **Relationships among staff:** It’s important to recognize the staff relationships that exist in the workplace, for example, IPAC Champions may be auditing or providing on-the-spot feedback to colleagues they consider friends. IPAC Leads should promote a culture of safety and Champions may also be reminded that when auditing, results are anonymized. Further, they should only provide on-the-spot feedback when the situation is appropriate and they feel comfortable approaching the staff (refer to section above for more detail).
- **Transparency:** Explain to other staff the role of IPAC Champions and note that they may be assisting in auditing and/or providing informal education and feedback. If IPAC Champions are known to staff, their presence alone may act as a simple reminder to follow best practices. Having staff understand IPAC Champion’s role may also improve receptiveness to their advice and feedback.

Policy Considerations

When reviewing or updating policies for your IPAC Champion program, consider the following:

1. Who can be an IPAC Champion?
2. Is there a minimum number of IPAC Champions your setting should maintain?
3. What activities will IPAC Champions be responsible for?
4. How will duties be assigned to IPAC Champions (e.g., assigned/scheduled)?
5. How will you ensure IPAC Champions provide comprehensive coverage (i.e. support during both morning and night shifts)?
6. What training must IPAC Champions complete as part of their orientation?
7. How often will the IPAC Lead meet with IPAC Champions for on-going support and education refreshers?
8. Will there be formal evaluation of the IPAC Champion Program?

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Additional Resources

Training Resources for IPAC Champions

[Thunder Bay District Health Unit IPAC Hub – Training Modules for IPAC Champions](#)

[Public Health Ontario’s Introduction to Just Clean Your Hands \(Long Term Care\) \[Video\]](#)

[Public Health Ontario’s FAQ: Four Moments of Hand Hygiene](#)

[Public Health Ontario’s Audit Training for Long-Term Care Homes \[Video\]](#)

[Public Health Ontario’s Introduction to Observation Tool and Training \[Video\]](#)

[Public Health Ontario’s How to Become a *Just Clean Your Hands* Observer](#)

[SE IPAC Hub & Spoke Team’s *IPAC Basics* Education \[PowerPoint with voiceover\]](#)

Program Implementation & Policy Considerations

[Champlain Regional IPAC Hub Team – IPAC Auditing Program](#)

[U.S. Centre for Prevention and Disease Control \(CDC\) – Infection Prevention Champions](#)

Providing On-The-Spot Feedback

[U.S. Centre for Prevention and Disease Control \(CDC\) – How to Provide Timely and Effective Feedback](#)

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Appendix A: Sample IPAC Champion Role Descriptions

Short-term role description (e.g., for modified workers):

As part of the short-term IPAC Champion role (e.g., <4 months), staff undergo education and training to help with infection prevention and control activities in the long-term care setting. Staff may then assist in duties such as:

- Collecting auditing data (e.g., hand hygiene, PPE donning and doffing);
- Inputting paper-based auditing results or surveillance data (e.g., daily symptoms tracking) into appropriate digital programs;
- Assisting with other duties as deemed appropriate by the IPAC Lead.

Long-term role description:

As part of the long-term IPAC Champion role, staff should be willing to commit at least 6 months in the position. By committing to a long-term role, this will allow Champions to receive comprehensive IPAC education and Champion training and can also provide them the opportunity to try a variety of duties supporting IPAC. Further, a long-term commitment can help with staff recognizing their role and over time increasing staff's use of the IPAC Champion for advice and facilitating communications about any concerns to the IPAC Lead.

The IPAC Lead can work with long-term IPAC Champions to identify specific goals or areas of interest they would like to focus on. Champions may consider some of the following activities:

- Collect auditing data (e.g., hand hygiene, PPE donning and doffing);
- Input paper-based auditing results or surveillance data (e.g., daily symptoms tracking) into appropriate digital programs;
- Peer-to-peer coaching for IPAC-related topics;
- Assist IPAC Leads in delivering IPAC in-services/education to frontline staff;
- Provide hand hygiene and PPE education for volunteers, visitors, essential caregivers;
- Assist in vaccination efforts where appropriate (e.g., obtaining consent, administration);
- Assist in the delivery of IPAC-related events (e.g., annual IPAC Awareness Week); and
- Take part in opportunities to co-present IPAC information where appropriate, such as quarterly IPAC Committee meetings, Family or Resident Council, or Joint Health and Safety Committee.

The role of long-term IPAC Champion can evolve over time, based on the needs of the home and/or the interest of the Champion. The IPAC Lead and Champion should meet regularly to discuss progress, any challenges experienced and goals for the future.