Creating a Teamwork Agreement

To turn groups of employees into great teams, a powerful first step is to form a teamwork agreement — an explicit agreement that lays out the ground rules for team members' behaviors. An agreement can cover things such as how members will work together, make decisions, communicate, share information, support each other and respond to conflict. These agreements are most effective when all team members have input on and agree to the components of the agreement.

For this reason, one of your team's first steps in the action series is to take the time to establish a teamwork agreement together. Your group's teamwork agreement should be simple, no more than a page and should outline:

1. A broad statement of what you want your team to achieve;
2. How your team will work together to foster teamwork and communication; and
3. How conflicts and challenges will be resolved.

Not sure how to do this? Don't worry; we'll walk you through the process below! First, here are the supplies that you will need:

- Flipchart paper
- Pens
- Post-it notes
- Markers or dots for dot-voting
- Your team

Step 1: Create a broad statement about what you want your team to achieve

Bring your team together to discuss what you want to achieve with the agreement. Consider:

- What you are committing to
- Why you are committing to it
- What you would like the outcome to be

From this discussion, create a broad statement to illustrate the purpose as well as the team's commitment to the teamwork agreement. For example, it might look something like this:

To advance the teamwork and communication of the <<team name>> team, we have created this teamwork agreement to define how we will work together.

Each member of the team is responsible and accountable to uphold our agreement as we work together to improve our teamwork and communication, as well as the outcomes of our patients/clients.

Step 2: Setting the foundation for working together

Have your team reflect on and consider what expectations team members have of each other.

Consider what is working well and what is not working well. These might include:
- Well:
    - Good communication
    - Respectful
    - Responsive
- Not working well:
    - People not completing their tasks
    - Personality styles
    - Domineering team members
    - Team members that don't contribute

Next, consider and discuss challenges unique to working with an interprofessional group. These might include:
- Different jargon/language
- Perceived hierarchies
- Different knowledge bases
- Team members at different stages in their profession
- Stereotyping

Step 3: Working together

Leverage the previous discussion and invite your team to decide on how they will work together to foster teamwork and communication. So, outlining the <u>positive</u> things the team wants to encourage.

Using post-it notes, have team members individually identify things they think will contribute to effective teamwork and communication. These might include such things as:
- Respect
- Trust that others will contribute and complete their tasks
- Accountability
- Honesty and transparency
- Equal participation
- Good communication

Have everyone post their individual ideas on shared flipchart paper. From here, you may need to remove duplicates or theme similar ideas together.

Once the duplicates have been removed and similar ideas have been themed, invite team members to dot vote on the top six items that they would like to see included in your team work agreement on how they want to work together.

As a group, review the top six to eight items that received the most dots in the dot voting process and discuss. Do these reflect what the team would like to see included? Anything missing? Come to consensus on the list and this will form the foundation of how your team will work together.

DOT VOTING IS A SIMPLE GROUP ACTIVITY FOR RECOGNIZING PREFERENCES AMONG LIMITED OPTIONS:
- *PARTICIPANTS ARE EACH GIVEN A SET NUMBER OF DOT STICKERS.*
- *THEY PLACE DOT STICKERS NEXT TO OPTIONS PRESENTED THAT THEY LIKE.*
- *OPTIONS WITH THE MOST DOTS "WIN".*

Step 4: Resolving conflicts and challenges

Again using post-it notes, have team members individually identify things they think will contribute to the effective resolution of conflict and challenges when they arise. These could include:
- Direct communication
- Addressing conflicts before they become destructive
- Creating the space for all team members to participate

Have everyone post their individual ideas on shared flipchart paper. From here, you may need to remove duplicates or theme similar ideas together.

Once the duplicates have been removed and similar ideas have been themed, invite team members to dot vote on the top six items that they would like to see included in your team work agreement on how they want to resolve conflict and challenges.

As a group, review the top six-eight items that received the most dots from the dot voting process and discuss. Do these reflect what the team would like to see included? Anything missing? Come to consensus on the list and this will form the foundation of how your team will resolve conflict and challenges.

CAN'T GET TOGETHER IN PERSON TO BUILD YOUR TEAMWORK AGREEMENT?
• Follow all the same steps on a whiteboard or bulletin board in your hallway and provide a couple of days for each step in the process to allow time to solicit feedback from each member of the team.

• Alternatively, complete your teamwork agreement through a series of brief huddles where you work through the steps.

Step 5: Pull the three pieces together into your single teamwork agreement document

Implementing Your Agreement:

1. It is helpful to post your teamwork agreement somewhere visible
2. Refer back to the agreement when you sense that the team is not functioning as it should
3. Challenge team members on adhering to the agreement early and often
4. Model the group guidelines in your own practice
5. Make a point to revisit the agreement occasionally. It needs to be a living document that changes as your team changes. Decide as a team how often this will be.

Sample Teamwork Agreement #1

To advance the teamwork and communication of the <<team name>> team, we have created this teamwork agreement to define how we will work together.

Each member of the team is responsible and accountable to uphold our agreement as we work together to improve our teamwork and communication as well as the outcome of our patients/clients.

The values we commit to be accountable to include:
• Respect
• Direct communication
• A commitment to complete tasks for which we are responsible
• Kindness
• Appreciation of each other
• Trust

Where differences arise, our team is committed to resolving conflict by:
• Addressing differences in a timely, open and honest manner
• Resolving issues at the staffing level at which they occur

Sample Teamwork Agreement #2

To advance the teamwork and communication of the <<team name>> team, we have created this teamwork agreement to define how we will work together.

Each member of the team is responsible and accountable to uphold our teamwork agreement as we work together to improve our teamwork and communication as well as the outcome of our patients/clients.

The teamwork agreement we commit to:
• Be respectful of our team members
• Have direct communication, rather than side bar conversations
• Commit to complete tasks for which we are responsible
• Practice kindness and compassion towards each other
• Trust in each other
• Not being afraid to say "I don't know" and ask for help
• Avoid interrupting others when they are speaking
• Holding each other accountable when someone is not acting in accordance with this agreement

Where differences arise, our team is committed to resolving conflict by:
• Addressing differences in a timely, open and honest manner
• Speaking to the people directly involved in the conflict first, before approaching a third party mediator, such as a manager or director
• Avoiding using blaming language. Use "I" language instead of "you" when talking about the issue