



Your Guide to Onboarding Skills and Competency Management for Home Health Care and Hospice

By MedBridge

Overview

With staffing shortages impacting clinical capacity, agencies are now hiring more RNs who are new to home health or hospice. These nurses must be quickly brought up to speed on crucial clinical and non-clinical skills so that they can provide confident, competent care.

Skills and competency management is one of the most effective ways for home-based care agencies to effectively train staff on crucial skills and get them into the field faster, improve satisfaction and retention, and ensure accurate outcomes and reimbursement.

MedBridge wants to help. In this guide we'll cover:

- How a digital skill checklist can streamline your onboarding process
- How a consistent onboarding program can attract and retain employees
- Examples from a skills training success story
- What to look for in a skills training solution

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Introducing Skills and Competency Management

Skills and competency management is the process of identifying and training the critical skills necessary for an employee to perform their role competently. In a home health or hospice setting, this starts during the onboarding process, in the form of targeted training that helps clinicians develop the necessary skill competencies to perform their healthcare duties in a safe and ethical manner.

Nurse competency includes more than just clinical skills, so a skills and competency management program might include training on:

- Patient care
- Medical or clinical knowledge
- Interpersonal and communication skills
- Practice-based learning and improvement
- Professionalism
- System-based practice
- And more

After onboarding, training is monitored and refreshed, typically on an annual basis, to ensure the clinician is continuing to perform at an optimal level. According to the nursing theory “From Novice to Expert,” nurses develop skills and a greater understanding of patient care from both a strong foundation of education as well as personal experiences gained over time.¹ The four predominant times when skills training will need to be signed off on are onboarding, annual competency reviews, incident remediation, and release of new procedures. Each of these has its own unique processes, but all rely on skills and competency management for knowledge acquisition.



4X

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The Importance of Skills and Competency Training

The importance of skills and competency management in home-based care is increasing each year due to a few compounding factors. The need for skilled nurses in the field is at an all-time high, but meeting this demand boils down to addressing a few core challenges:

- First, widespread staffing shortages are impacting clinical capacity, creating critical challenges for HHAs. In a review by Tourangeau, Cranley, and Jeffs, seven studies demonstrated that higher staffing ratios of RNs were predictive of lower patient mortality.⁴ In response to this shortage, agencies are now hiring an increased number of RNs who may be new to home health or hospice. These new hires need sufficient training before they can enter the field with competence and confidence, as well as reference materials when they need a refresher on site—particularly when it comes to advanced skills.
- Second, organizations are facing ever greater challenges to retain highly skilled employees in a competitive market, while also improving performance and developing leadership talent from within. Home health agencies are competing against hospitals and other settings for the same talent, but hospital career paths are often recommended by educational institutions and have the ability to provide better pay and benefits.⁵
- Third, home health practitioners are often working autonomously in patients' homes. Unlike other settings, they do not have teams of clinicians following them, and organizations have an ethical obligation to ensure that their clinicians are trained adequately and are able to administer care in a safe and competent manner.

 **73%**

Between 2011 and 2019, the U.S. population of those ages 65 and over has increased by 73 percent, from 41 million to 71 million²

 **4th**

As of April 2022, registered nurses are the 4th most in-demand job in the American workforce³



The Benefits of Digital Skills Competency Training

Traditional skills training programs are weeks long, and involve long hours in an in-person skills lab setting with preceptors. Scheduling and holding necessary training can require a significant investment in terms of cost of training, preceptor scheduling, and lost hours during which healthcare practitioners aren't in the field caring for patients.

Digitizing the skills training process makes it more agile, allowing HHA administrators to assign preceptors, critical onboarding training, continuing education, and compliance material to a larger volume of staff without the need to coordinate the moving parts required for management through paper checklists to succeed. A digital skills checklist allows administrators to understand the skills that new hires are coming in with so they can customize the skills sign-off process for each. Back-office staff also get visibility into the process, allowing them to intervene sooner if someone is falling behind and schedule patients whose level of care matches with the skills each new hire possesses.



Digitizing the training process can prevent weeks-long, in-person training with high costs and lost hours.

Other benefits to digitizing skills training for home health and hospice organizations include the following:

Onboarding New Talent

Onboarding is a critical time for new hires, and employees who receive a comprehensive, quality educational program will be more equipped for success in the fast-paced home care environment. With digital skills training, clinicians gain confidence and competence faster, cutting down on time to productivity and increasing the number of clinicians ready to care for patients.

One way to streamline onboarding is by starting with a digital skills checklist, an online self-assessment customized to the skills necessary for employees at your agency. These skills can then be assigned to newly hired nurses, and assigned preceptors can then review the assessment, identify skill gaps, and create a personalized and targeted training plan to bring nurses up to speed quickly and efficiently to get them into the field faster. As skills are acquired, preceptors can sign off, creating an online trail that is easily accessible for tracking and documentation.

An online digital skills checklist can be incorporated into your training with these steps:

- Establish an assessment of the core skills for new nursing hires.
- Curate or source a library of targeted courses on critical clinical and non-clinical home health and hospice skills.
- Require preceptors to review self-assessments and report on completed training.
- Create a system to document and report that allows administrators to assign said preceptors.
- Document training for records, track which clinicians are qualified to treat which conditions, and prepare for audits and annual reviews.

Retaining Employees

Well-trained, competent employees are an investment in your business, and a robust skills competency training program helps grow their clinical skill-set and boosts loyalty and retention.

A digital skills training program can help elevate employee satisfaction and retention by helping your staff feel supported beyond onboarding with customized training programs that focus on skill gaps revealed during annual training programs or from feedback collected in the field. With digital skills training as an option, administrators can assign targeted refresher courses from a library of educational materials to ensure staff get the support they need to succeed.

You can also help staff feel confident in the field by supporting them with mobile-friendly refresher training videos available on the go. A quick refresher demo can make a big difference for staff confidence when they need to provide care that requires complex skills they have not practiced for some time.

Mitigating Compliance and Regulatory Risk

Skills training, competencies, preceptor sign-off, and other training documentation needs to be able to stand up to yearly reviews and audits. This can also help administrators and preceptors in several use cases:

Annual Training

With a digital record, administrators can easily obtain documentation of past clinical and non-clinical skill acquisition for each individual. This can be used to monitor which skills need refreshing, assign appropriate preceptors, and track completions for the entire staff.

Incident Remediation

In the event of an incident requiring remediation, an administrator can quickly pull up important background information such as training dates for the associated skill, or record of preceptor sign-off. They can then easily assign and track any necessary remediation training, and monitor progress to ensure it has been completed.

Risk Mitigation

In the event of an audit, documentation of the program will need to be collected—a stressful and time-consuming process on paper.

With a digital skills checklist and reporting and analytics dashboard, the entire program is collected and documented online, streamlining the process and reducing the risk associated with paper-based skill checklists and training programs.



A Skills Training Success Story

Client Challenge

Interim HealthCare of the Upstate is a community-focused health organization founded in 1979 and offering a full continuum of home health, personal care, and hospice services. Recently, Interim began to experience an even greater uptick in client demand, and needed an onboarding program that could easily scale training, improve staff satisfaction and retention, boost clinical competency, and reduce time to productivity for new full-time nursing hires.

Interim had previously used a combination of online and live classroom instruction, but realized they needed to implement a fully online system that could standardize high-quality training and track progress to improve performance.

The MedBridge Solution

To improve its onboarding process, Interim turned to the MedBridge Skills and Competency Manager, an end-to-end solution for home health and hospice onboarding and training integrated within the MedBridge Learning Management System. By partnering with MedBridge, Interim has been able to implement an online onboarding program that seamlessly combines content produced by both Interim and MedBridge, and has succeeded in:

- **Standardizing and scaling training**
- **Prioritizing hands-on training**
- **Reducing preceptor time**
- **Tracking staff satisfaction**



Standardize + scale training across the organization with MedBridge's Learning Management System.



Prioritize hands-on training and track skill competency with the MedBridge Skills Checklist, an online clinical skill self-assessment for new nursing hires.



Reduce preceptor time with a documentation and reporting dashboard that allows administrators to assign preceptors to new clinicians and allows preceptors to review clinician self-assessments and document training.



Track staff satisfaction with a survey for new hires in home health and hospice.

Results

Since partnering with MedBridge, Interim has seen:

➤ Significant Cost Savings

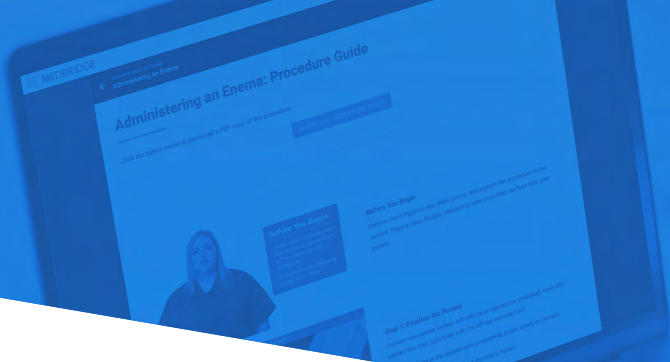
Interim's new onboarding program has helped the organization reduce onboarding expenses by 11.5 percent for home health nurses (\$7,000 in savings per nurse, based on an 8.7-week onboarding program) and by 17.9 percent for hospice nurses (\$7,000 in savings per nurse, based on a 5.6-week onboarding program). Altogether, this results in a total projected savings of \$600,000 in annual operating costs.

➤ Reduced Onboarding Time

Interim has been able to reduce onboarding time by seven days for both home health and hospice nurses. By onboarding nurses more efficiently, Interim is able to serve more patients in their community as well as improve the experience of nurses who are new to home health and hospice as they prepare for the field.

➤ High Staff Satisfaction

When Interim staff members were surveyed about their onboarding experience, 100 percent reported that the quality of onboarding training they received was good or excellent.



How Our Solution Works

The MedBridge Skills and Competency Manager includes everything your agency needs to streamline the onboarding and preceptor process, get new nurses trained on critical clinical and non-clinical home health and hospice skills so they can start providing patient care faster, and document and report on training and skill competency, all on a single online platform.

With our Skills and Competency Manager, an online self-assessment—customized to the skills crucial for employees at your agency—is assigned to newly hired nurses. Assigned preceptors can then review the assessment, identify skill gaps, and create a personalized and targeted training plan to bring nurses up to speed quickly and efficiently and get them into the field faster.

Training can include our Clinical Skills, a library of bite-sized home health- and hospice-specific courses available for on-the-go viewing and designed for engagement and information retention, or hands-on training by the preceptor. As skills are acquired, preceptors can sign off, creating an online "paper trail" that is easily accessible on the MedBridge Reporting and Analytics Dashboard for future viewing and reporting.

Please take a moment to assess your current expertise for each skill mentioned below. This will help your preceptor determine the level of support and guidance you may require in order to complete the skill effectively.

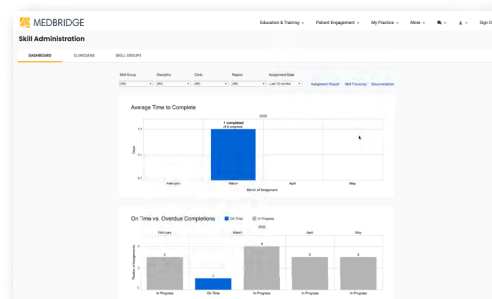
1. Admission to Organization		EXPERIENCED? ID	ABLE TO PERFORM? ID
SKILL		Yes No	Yes No
Initiate Assessment Form		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Initiate care plan based on assessment		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Knowledge of Nursing Process		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

2. Central Venous Access Device		EXPERIENCED? ID	ABLE TO PERFORM? ID
SKILL		Yes No	Yes No
Cap Change		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Catheter		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Dressing Blood		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Flushing		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Site Care		<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No



MedBridge Reporting and Analytics Dashboard

The dashboard also provides data-driven insights so administrators can evaluate their onboarding and training program to look for additional opportunities for time savings, identify trends, and download reports as needed to meet regulatory requirements.



Conclusion

With staffing challenges reaching critical levels and Home Health Value-Based Purchasing on the horizon, the importance of an effective onboarding and clinical training program is only continuing to grow. Innovative solutions like the Skills and Competency Manager will be key to meeting your staffing challenges, elevating your workforce, and ensuring your patients' needs are met. The future of healthcare is in the home, and with the strategies laid out today, you'll be able to equip your staff with the training they need to give their patients the high quality of care *they* need.

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ABOUT MEDBRIDGE

Founded in 2011, MedBridge is an innovator at the intersection of healthcare technology, education, and patient engagement. We have helped more than 2,500 healthcare organizations grow their business, elevate their workforce, and deliver exceptional patient experiences. For more information, visit medbridgeeducation.com.

See how MedBridge can help your organization.

[Contact us to request a demo.](#)