DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This guide is intended to assist organizations in creating easy-to-use policies and procedures, as well as implementing an effective policy and procedure maintenance cycle.

An organizational **policy** is a statement of principles, rules, and guidelines that an organization follows in order to achieve a desired outcome. It exists to communicate an organization's point of view to its employees and to ensure that actions carried out at the organization take place within the policy's defined boundaries.

A **procedure** is a set of actions that an employee takes to complete an activity within the confines of an organizational policy. It exists as a reference for employees to understand their roles and responsibilities.

All policies and procedures (P&P) written by an organization are combined into one document called a **P&P Manual**. Maintaining a P&P Manual – the act of writing or revising documents within it – is an ongoing effort. It must be reviewed periodically in order to ensure continued accuracy.

Beyond writing P&Ps, an organization must take additional steps to ensure that the guidance reflected in the documents are effectively implemented throughout the organization. Additionally, P&Ps should be retired and archived in a timely fashion to ensure staff have ready access to retired documents in the event of a regulatory or legal inquiry. All these activities combined make up a **P&P Maintenance Cycle**.

NOTE: Clinical protocols serve an important role in providing guidance in health care organizations and should be taken into consideration as necessary when developing P&Ps. Refer to NFPRHA's resource, **Developing Clinical Protocols for Family Planning Services**, for guidance on writing and maintaining clinical protocols.

ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN A POLICY OR PROCEDURE

Maintaining a consistent format across organizational P&Ps increases the ease of use for the end user. It also ensures that newly drafted P&Ps include all necessary sections.

BEST PRACTICE #1: Create a standard template for P&Ps that includes the following elements to ensure consistency between documents:

- Purpose of the document
- Policy statement to support rationale for document
- Background, if applicable
- References to other related policies, procedures, and protocols
- References to related tools, resources, forms, etc.
- Citations to legal, regulatory, and professional references
- Header or footer with:
    - Organization name
    - Title of document
    - Tracking number
    - Date of implementation
    - Date of revision
    - Date of next scheduled review
    - Page number within each policy

CREATING AND MAINTAINING A P&P MANUAL

Combining all current P&Ps into a P&P Manual creates a centralized location for staff members to easily access the P&Ps pertinent to their role within the organization.

BEST PRACTICE #1: Create a standard template for a P&P Manual that includes the following elements to ensure consistency:

- Title page indicating:
  - Type of manual
  - Purpose of the manual
  - Date of initial publication
  - Date of revisions
  - Date of next review
  - Timeframe for approved use
- Table of contents, including title of each section and the P&Ps included within
- The name, title, date, and signature of the individual providing final approval for use
- Credit to the authors, including names and titles
- Each current policy or procedure

BEST PRACTICE #2: Format the manual to allow for updating of individual pages, individual documents, and entire sections. For example, format page numbers so that individual documents can be removed or revised without having to renumber pages in the entire document.

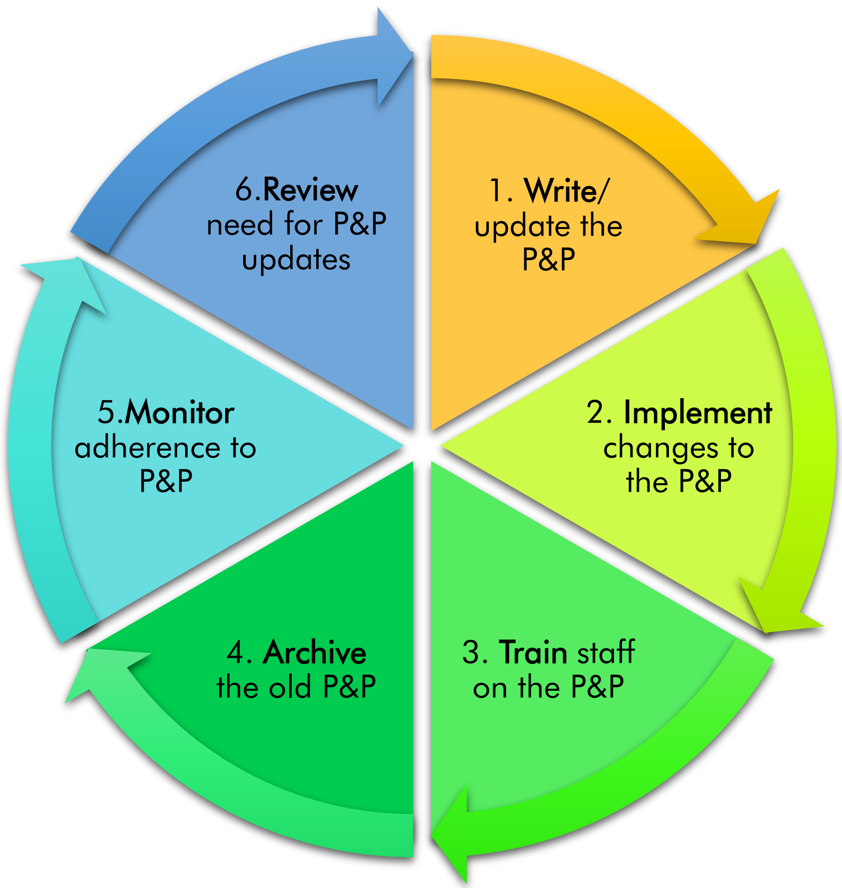
BEST PRACTICE #3: Create a numerical tracking system to improve the manual's ease of use. For example, file financial policies in Section 100, clinical policies in Section 200, etc. Give each document in the section a corresponding reference number (e.g. 100-001 Income Determination Policy, 100-002 Schedule of Discounts Policy, etc.)

BEST PRACTICE #4: Consider providing staff with the organization's P&P manual solely in an electronic format. Doing so ensures that staff always refer to the current version. If paper copies of a P&P manual remain in use, designate a staff person to archive old copies and distribute new copies each time a change occurs.

BEST PRACTICE #5: If the manual is used in an electronic format, create hyperlinks in the table of contents to send users directly to the referenced document within the manual.

THE P&P MAINTENANCE CYCLE

Implementing a P&P Maintenance Cycle helps to ensure that P&Ps are current and easily accessible. It can also support the successful integration of P&P requirements throughout an organization.



The P&P Maintenance Cycle

BEST PRACTICE #1: Create a P&P Maintenance Cycle based on the following steps:

1. Write or update the P&P

- Write a new P&P or update an existing P&P to reflect any changes to recommendations included in the document or based on the P&P review process
- Write to the level of understanding for the end user
- Get approval from the final authority before implementation

2. Implement changes to the P&P

- Replace and archive outdated policies in printed and electronic P&P manuals
- Create or update and distribute/implement supplementary materials [e.g., forms, documentation, electronic health record (EHR) templates]
- Create a written summary of the P&P change and disseminate to all affected staff

3. Train staff on the P&P

- Refer staff to P&P changes and answer any questions
- Assess staff understanding during and after the training or in-service
- Create a training documentation system to track when and to whom training on P&Ps was provided. Document training in your training documentation system, including:
    - Date of training
    - Specific P&Ps covered by the training
    - How training was provided
    - Who conducted the training
    - Individual staff acknowledgement of receipt of training
- Create a recognition system for staff who will need to adopt and adhere to new P&Ps

4. Archive the old P&P

- Create an electronic repository to store P&Ps that are no longer in effect
- Move outdated P&Ps and related documents to the P&P archive. Related documents include:
    - Title pages, referenced materials, authorizing signature page, training materials, training documentation, memos, audit reports
- Add a discontinued date to indicate when the document is retired
- Seek legal advice to clarify how long P&Ps should be retained and when it is acceptable to destroy archived documents

5. Monitor adherence to P&P

- Set dates and times for formal check-ins with applicable supervisors on staff implementation and adherence to the new P&P
- Conduct formal reviews and audits to assess ongoing compliance
- Use audit results to identify problem areas, P&Ps that require additional detail, and retraining needs

6. Review need for P&P updates

- Review P&Ps at least annually or whenever there are changes needed based on:
  - Federal/state/local regulation changes
  - New clinical guidance
  - Staff feedback
  - Patient feedback
- Make recommendations for P&P updates
- Involve stakeholders throughout review process
- Establish a process to elicit staff questions and feedback on P&Ps

BEST PRACTICE #2: Identify the staff members responsible for each step of the P&P Maintenance Cycle, including who has the final authority to approve implementation of new or updated policies.

BEST PRACTICE #3: Develop a written procedure for each step of the P&P Maintenance Cycle and include these documents in the appropriate P&P Manual within the organization.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NFPRHA has created a suite of resources to help family planning providers maintain policies, procedures, and clinical protocols. Visit www.nationalfamilyplanning.org to access these members-only resources:

- Sample Policy & Procedure: Development, Review, and Maintenance of Organizational Policies and Procedure (PDF) – *A sample policy and procedure for an organization to document the process for developing, reviewing, and maintaining its internal policies and procedures (January 2019).*

- Sample Policy & Procedure: Training and Implementation Guidelines for Policy and Procedure Changes (PDF) – *A sample policy and procedure for an organization to ensure staff are appropriately trained on policies and procedures and that sufficient documentation exists to demonstrate training was completed and transfer of knowledge occurred (January 2019).*

- Sample Policy & Procedure: Archiving Policies and Procedures (PDF) – *A sample policy and procedure for an organization to clarify the document retention and archival practices of the organization (January 2019).*

- Developing Clinical Protocols for Family Planning Services (PDF) – *A checklist of recommended clinical protocols for providers of contraceptive and family planning services, as well as references to current national guidelines for family planning services (September 2019).*

- Clinical Protocols Template: Syphilis Testing & Treatment (Word) – *A template protocol for the testing and treatment of syphilis. Designed to assist organizations in creating a local protocol for a family planning health center. (September 2019).*

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This document was prepared by the National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association (NFPRHA). It is intended for informational purposes and does not constitute legal or medical advice or NFPRHA's endorsement of a specific product.

Available online at: www.nationalfamilyplanning.org/pages/issues/issues---providing-high-quality-services---health-center-operations

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