Step 3.2 – Describe Event

# RCA Timeline Worksheet

## Introduction

Use the RCA Timeline Worksheet to collect and organize the facts surrounding the event to understand what happened and what time it happened. Once the timeline is created, the team then can analyze the facts to determine if a system or process breakdown occurred at that step.

## How to Use

At the first meeting of the team, review all information, including any incident reports, documentation, and interview notes. Create a timeline of what happened, then develop the timeline. Items included are what happened, when it occurred, who was involved, what was the order of events, when it was discovered, were there any products or processes that didn't go as they should, and was there any immediate corrective action completed?

1. Identify the event
2. Document each step leading up to the event. Determine these steps from the information that has been collected, including incident reports, documentations, interview notes, etc. Describe just the facts, not what caused it to happen that way. For each step leading up to the event include:
    - The date and time
    - What occurred or was found
    - The source of the information
3. Steps should be documented in order of what happened. Steps to consider adding to the timeline include when information was discovered and any immediate action taken to correct the situation.
4. Once the timeline has been created, the facilitator finalizes the timeline by asking the team:
    - Does the timeline adequately tell the "story" of what happened? If yes, go to the next question. If not, the scope of the timeline needs to be extended further back in time or expanded to include more of what happened after the event. Decide where to find the missing information and collect it. This may mean more interviews or documentation searches.
    - Does each step in the timeline follow directly from the step it precedes? If yes, go to the next question. If no, it usually indicates that one or more steps in the sequence have been left out. Review the steps, gather any missing information, and add missing steps to the timeline.
    - Is each step in the timeline relative to the incident under investigation? The answer may be "yes," "no," or "not sure." Include only the "yes" and "not sure" steps in the event timeline.

- Does everyone agree that the time line represents what actually happened? If yes, go to step 4. If not, now is the time to conduct more interviews or do more investigation to gather more information and clarify "factual" inconsistencies about the event.

5. The team should now review each step in the timeline and check the last column to indicate whether a system or process breakdown occurred that led to the event.

**Describe event:**

## RCA Timeline

| DATE | TIME | WHAT OCCURRED OR WAS FOUND? | INFORMATION SOURCE | MARK WITH A CHECK (✓) IF A SYSTEM OR PROCESS BREAKDOWN OCCURRED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |



**Produced under contract with the Minnesota Department of Health**

**Produced with the use of Federal Nursing Home Civil Money Penalty Funds**