

2008 AHAP Benchmarking Survey: Handoff Communications



Dear AHAP members,

This special report includes results from AHAP's 2008 handoff communications benchmarking survey. In it you'll find a summary of this year's statistics, as well as data for each survey question.

This is the third of our quarterly benchmarking surveys for AHAP members only. We hope this special report will serve as a useful benchmarking tool for you and your organization.

Are these results consistent with what you are seeing? Does anything surprise you? Discuss it with your fellow AHAP members using the "AHAP Talk" listserv. If you're not already signed up, contact me at briandriscoll@hcpro.com or 781/639-1872 x3103. And please contact me with any questions, or suggestions for upcoming benchmarking surveys.

Thank you! I look forward to providing you with more benchmarking opportunities in the coming months.

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Most organizations use form to facilitate handoffs ***Less than one-third make them part of the patient record***

National Patient Safety Goal #2 requires hospitals to improve staff communication, but it does not require them to do so with a form. Still, 77% of AHAP members have a form to facilitate handoffs, according to AHAP's 2008 handoff communications benchmarking survey. And only 27% make the forms part of patients' permanent records.

Hopefully, the 23% of survey respondents who said they do not have a form have an appropriate process in place, says **Elizabeth Di Giacomo-Geffers, RN, MPH, CNA, BC**, a healthcare consultant in Trabuco Canyon, CA, former Joint Commission surveyor, and member of the AHAP advisory board.

"The 27% that do not make the form part of the permanent record does not match the 23% that do not have a form," she says. "They must use something else, like a 'ticket to ride.' "

It's not surprising that most organizations have a form, says **Gayla J. Jackson, RN, BSN**, nurse manager at Mount Auburn Hospital in Cambridge, MA, and also a member of the AHAP advisory board. "It seems like we are all experimenting with different types of forms to help the process."

Jackson isn't surprised, either, that few organizations are making handoffs part of the permanent record. "Nor do I think they should," she says.

Department-specific forms

Thirty-seven percent of AHAP members who responded to the survey said they have one handoff form for the entire organization, while another 37% said they have many, department-specific forms.

"With many, department-specific forms, how is the process standardized?" asks Di Giacomo-Geffers.

"I have seen and heard of different forms used on specific units to facilitate change-of-shift reports," says Jackson.

"Every unit has its own specific type of change-of-shift report. And most organizations do not want to upset the 'unit thing.' We are trying

to use the same form for handoffs between units and for tests,” she says. “And that does make sense.”

According to the survey, of the organizations that use many, department-specific handoff forms, 72% have a standardized component in each form.

Keeping one part of the form standardized is important, says Jackson. “That is the part that ensures we meet all the implementation expectations for this National Patient Safety Goal.”

Creative tools

Sixty-six percent of AHAP members responding to the survey reported that they use SBAR to help staff remember their handoff process. While 14% reported using another creative tool, 20% said they do not use a creative tool.

For those that do not using a creative tool, the assumption is that they already communicate effectively, says Di Giacomo-Geffers. “But most hospitals are struggling to come up with a tool that will work for all parts of the hospital,” adds Jackson.

For the 80% that did report using a creative tool to help staff remember their handoff process, 49% reported that their tool is paper-based, 6% said their tool is electronic, and 45% said their tool is a combination of both.

“We use a combination—paper for the specific units and electronic for the transfers and procedures,” says Jackson.

Regardless of the approach AHAP members are using to help staff remember the handoff process, it appears to be working—100% of those surveyed in the past year reported that The Joint Commission rated their handoff process as compliant.

“That 100% indicates they are doing something right,” says Di Giacomo-Geffers, “or surveyors missed opportunities for improvement.”

The handoff requirements are not too hard to comply with, add Jackson, “as long as your staff can speak to the required components as listed in the implementation expectations.”

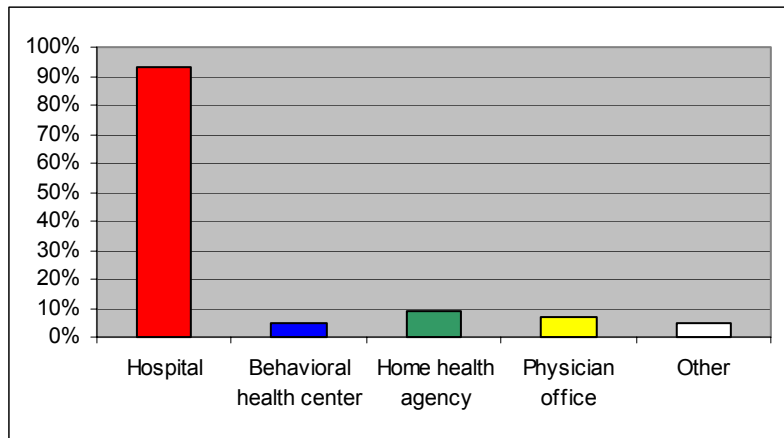
Survey results

Editor's note: Figures represent the responses of 57 AHAP members from hospitals in the following bed-size categories:

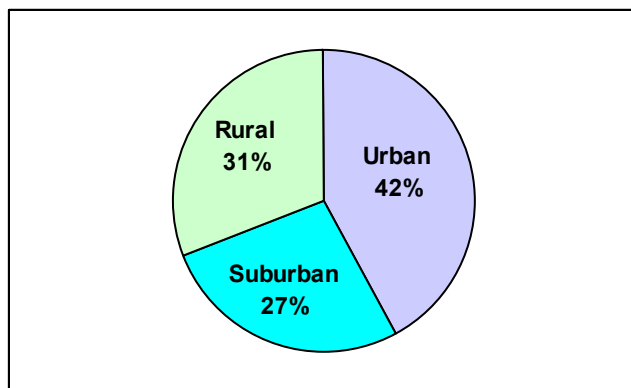
- Fewer than 150 beds (32%)
- 150–300 beds (27%)
- More than 300 beds (41%)

For which type of facility do you work? (Select all that apply.)

Hospital	93%
Behavioral health center	5%
Home health agency	9%
Physician office	7%
Other	5%

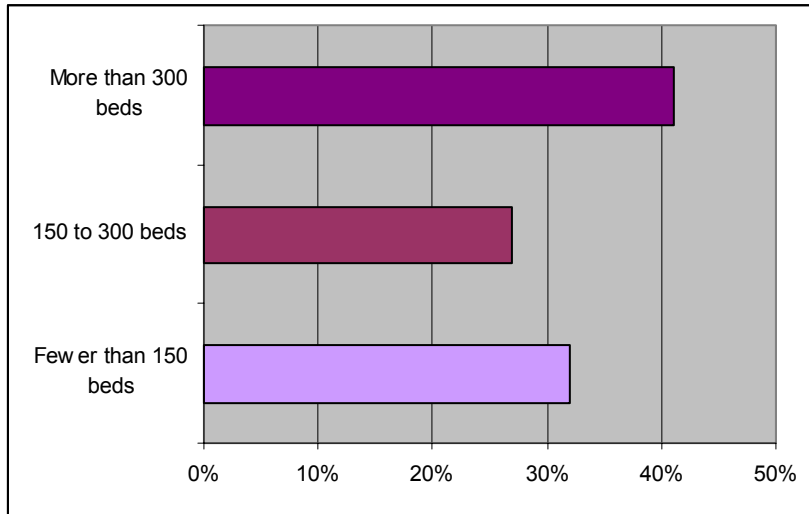


In what type of setting is your facility located?

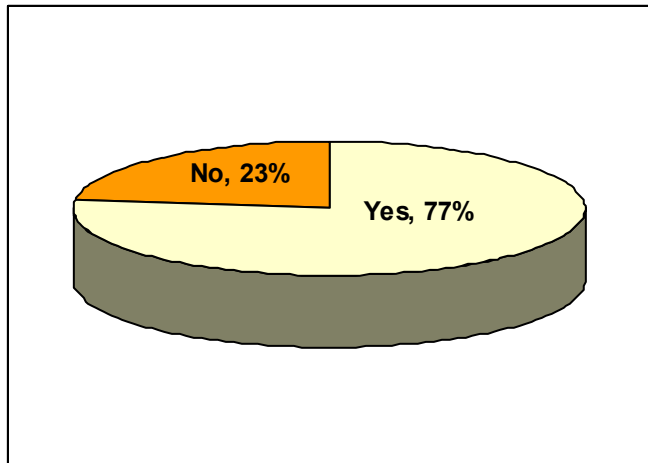


What size is your facility?

Fewer than 150 beds	32%
150 to 300 beds	27%
More than 300 beds	41%

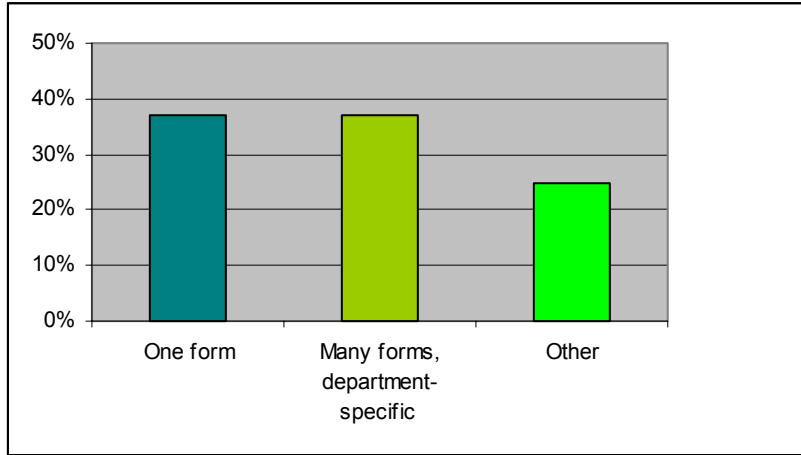


Do you have a form to facilitate handoffs?

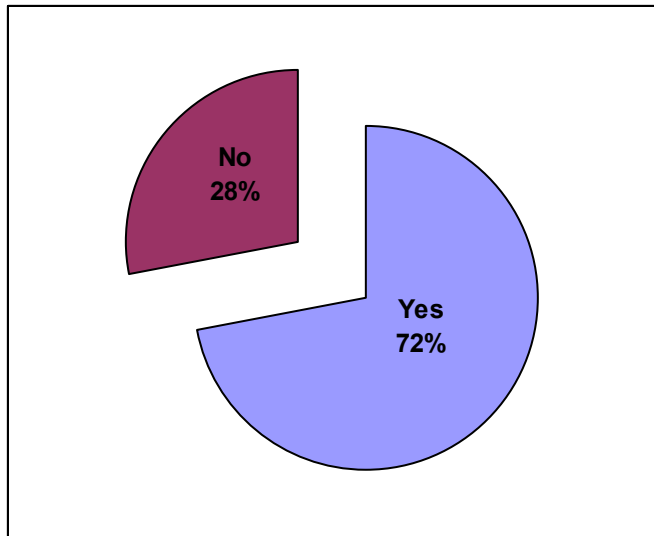


Do you have one handoff form for the entire facility, or do you use department-specific forms?

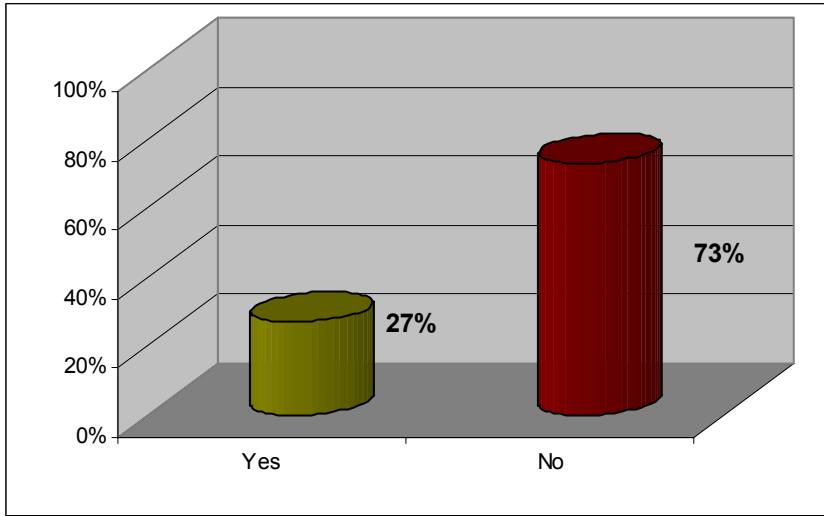
One form	37%
Many forms, department-specific	37%
Other	25%



If you use department-specific forms, is there are standardized component to each one?

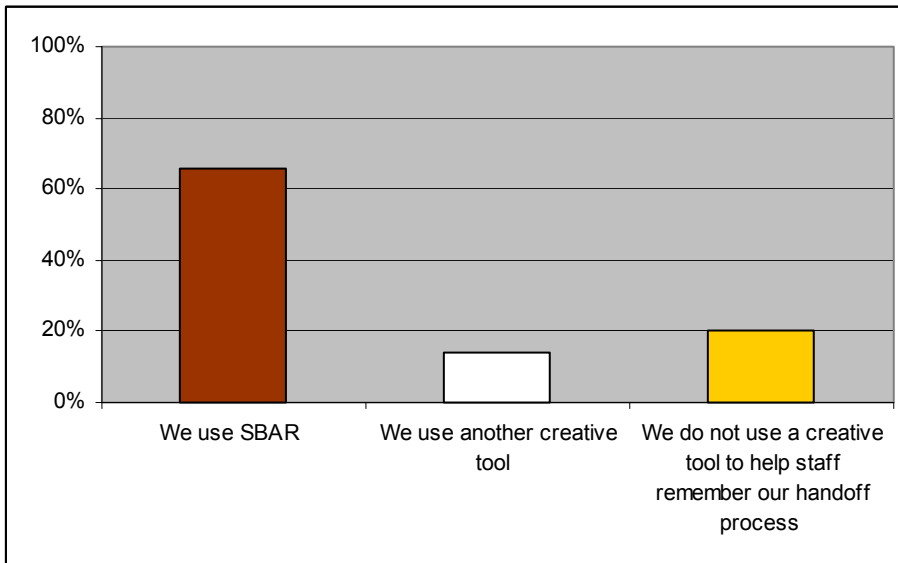


Do your handoffs become part of a patient's permanent record?



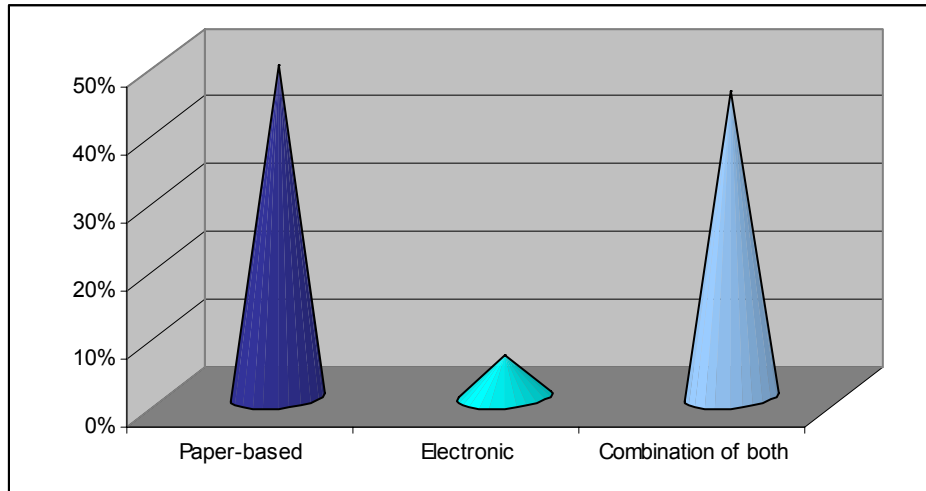
Do you use a creative tool, like SBAR or another device, to help staff remember your handoff process?

We use SBAR	66%
We use another creative tool	14%
We do not use a creative tool to help staff remember our handoff process	20%



If so, is your tool paper-based, electronic, or a combination of both?

Paper-based	49%
Electronic	6%
Combination of both	45%

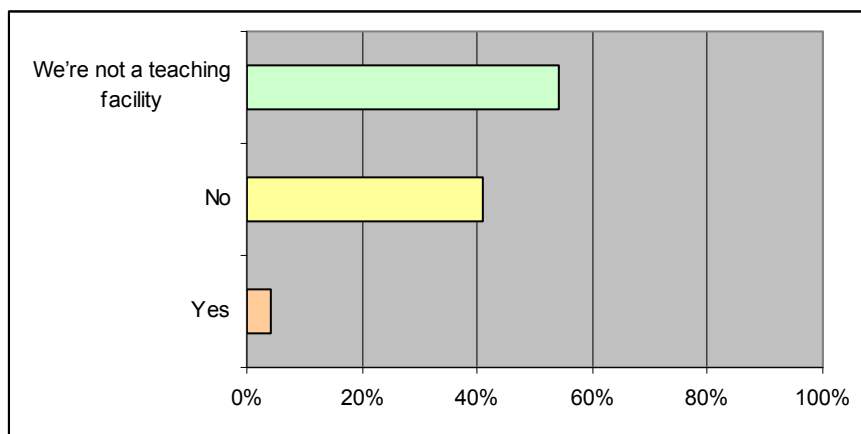


Have you been surveyed in the past year? If so, how did The Joint Commission rate your handoff process?

Compliant	100%
Noncompliant	0%

If you are a teaching facility, do you have a special handoff tool for new medical students and residents?

Yes	4%
No	41%
We're not a teaching facility	54%



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