



BUYER'S GUIDE

2027 Safety Event Reporting

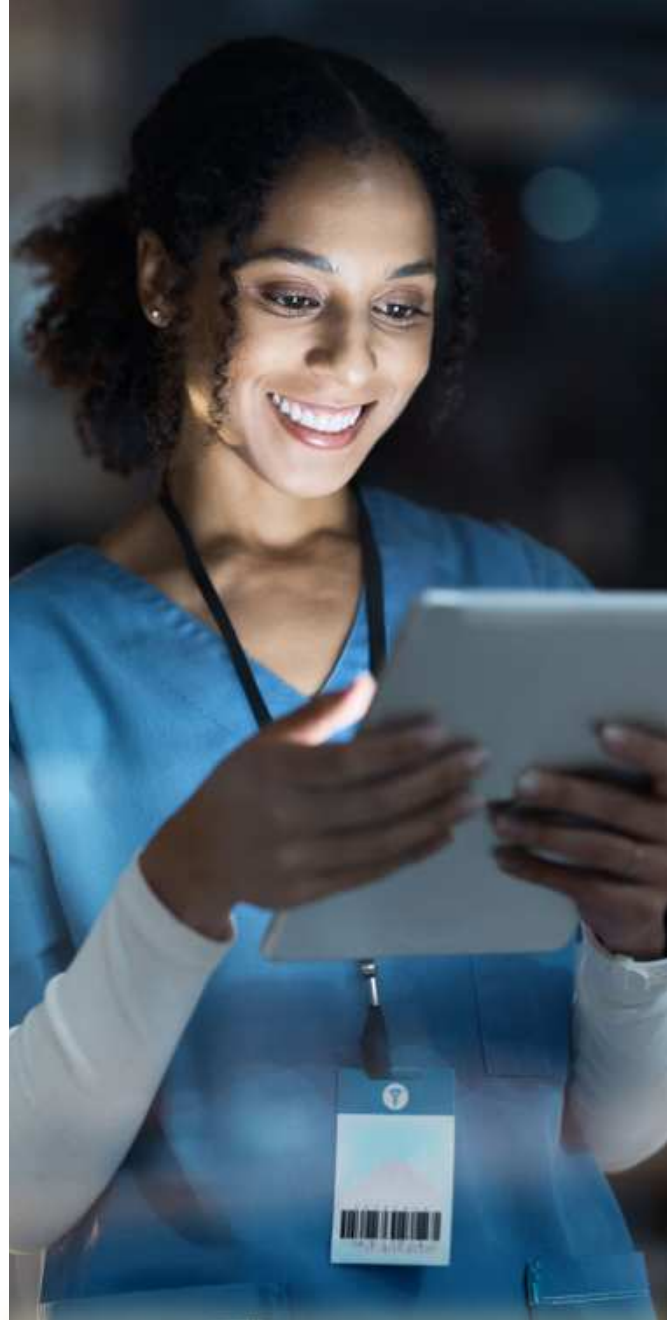
How to Choose the Right Safety Event Reporting System

Your guide to enhancing care and reducing risks in healthcare facilities

Implementing an effective safety event reporting system is a vital strategy for inpatient and outpatient facilities seeking to enhance care and reduce risk. These systems help quality and safety teams maintain regulatory compliance through efficient documentation and management of safety events. They also support a culture of continuous improvement by helping staff, clinicians, and leadership identify gaps across the organization, enabling more informed strategies to prevent future harm and improve patient outcomes.

However, not every safety event reporting system is equally effective. When reporting is slow, manual, or difficult to use, valuable safety information can be delayed or missed altogether.

This guide is designed to help your organization evaluate safety event reporting solutions by highlighting the capabilities that distinguish modern systems from legacy approaches. Inside, you'll learn how the right solution can help you spend less time documenting events and more time identifying opportunities to improve patient safety.



Does this sound familiar?

Your current safety event reporting system may be creating unnecessary work if:

- Staff sifts through manual entries before reporting an event.
- Reporting a safety event takes more than fifteen minutes.
- Near misses go unreported because staff don't have time to complete another form.
- Investigators leave the system to gather patient records or other supporting information.

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Integration, Implementation, and Training

Your safety event reporting system should support your teams, not create more work for employees or IT. Simple integration, straightforward implementation, comprehensive training, and responsive support help ensure your organization gets value from the system from day one.

1 Integration

Look for a solution that integrates with your electronic health record (EHR) and leverages multiple data sources, including patient demographics, medication orders, pharmacy orders, and lab results.

2 Configurability

Choose a platform that adapts to your organization's workflows with tailored event forms, automated notifications, and configurable communication processes that align with the way your teams work.

3 Security

Strong security should include encryption for data in transit and at rest, role-based access controls, third-party security attestations, and security audit reporting. Regular vulnerability and penetration testing by an independent security firm should also be part of the vendor's security program.

4 Accessibility

Staff should be able to document and review events from approved mobile devices without downloading an app, making reporting easier wherever they're working.

5 Training

Training should include live and on-demand education for both new and existing staff. Role-based training should be available for administrators, investigators, and reporters so every user understands how to document, manage, and investigate safety events effectively.

6 Support

An experienced healthcare support team should provide a dedicated point of contact who responds quickly to questions and requests. Support should extend beyond troubleshooting to include assistance with custom forms, reports, dashboards, and evolving workflow needs.



Electronic Triggers for Safety Events

One of the biggest differences between legacy safety event reporting systems and modern platforms is the ability to automatically detect potential safety events. Instead of relying solely on staff to recognize and report every event, automated detection helps surface risks in near real-time, improving visibility while reducing manual effort.

Also known as automatic event detection, electronic triggers reduce the likelihood of missed safety events, ensure a faster response, and decrease time spent entering data.

1 Automated identification

Look for a solution that leverages automatic safety event detection to identify potential safety events as they occur, including those healthcare workers are least likely to report. Automated detection helps reduce missed or unreported events caused by time constraints, delayed reporting, or concerns about punitive action. To support this functionality, the platform should continuously monitor EHR data, including patient demographics, medication orders, medication administrations, lab results, radiology notes, and vital signs, then trigger events based on predefined criteria.

2 Automated alerts

Choose a platform that automatically routes events or sends notifications when predefined criteria are met, creating opportunities for near real-time communication between safety teams and front-line staff.



Automated Event Detection In Action

The event reporting platform should use several criteria for automatic detection.

For example, if the following criteria are met for Narcan, it should document a safety event automatically:

1. Narcan is administered to a patient who recently received morphine.
2. The patient has evidence of respiratory depression via a decrease in respiratory rate or oxygen saturation.
3. The patient is not currently located in a procedural area where the use of Narcan is more routine.



Health systems increasingly recognize that they must find ways to intervene more quickly when safety events occur. The longer the delay in intervention, the more likely it is a similar event will occur again. **Automated event detection and alerts keep patients safer because interventions can be made faster.”**

Karen Biesack

Senior Application Support Analyst,
Inovalon



Event Reporting

Configurable reporting forms, pre-populated data, and intelligent fields help staff spend less time documenting events while improving reporting accuracy.

1 Configurable forms

Look for forms that are tailored to your organization during implementation and can be easily adjusted as workflows and reporting needs evolve.

2 Mandatory form fields

Mandatory fields should be easy to configure, helping ensure critical information is captured consistently without adding unnecessary complexity.

3 Anonymous reporting

Anonymous reporting options should be available for all events or selected event types, encouraging staff to report concerns without fear of punitive action.

4 Auto-populated demographic data

Patient and staff information should populate automatically within reporting forms to reduce manual data entry and improve accuracy. Completing a report should take no more than five minutes.

5 Intelligent field population

Reporting forms should adapt as information is entered, displaying only the fields relevant to the event being documented. For example, the “Name of Provider Notified” field should only appear after the reporter indicates that a provider was notified.

6 Smart logic

Built-in smart logic should recognize keywords and phrases, then associate them with standardized risk terms to improve accuracy and provide greater visibility into organizational risk trends.

7 Attachments

Reporters should be able to attach supporting files, including photos, videos, PDFs, and audio recordings, so investigators have the information they need in one place.

8 Location and facility-specific tags

Searchable location and facility tags should make it easy to associate events with specific departments, facilities, or care areas to improve reporting accuracy and analysis.

“My mantra throughout this process has been that it only takes 30 to 60 seconds to enter a risk event — it all depends on how fast you type.”

Kerrie Griffin
Director of Ambulatory
Quality Management,
CHRISTUS Health

“Automated event detection saves us a significant amount of time and gives us more peace of mind that more events are captured. As a result, we can now spend more time analyzing events and identifying improvement opportunities.”

Tina Collins
PharmD, Corporate Director
of Medication Safety,
CHRISTUS Health

400%
Increase in adverse drug reactions (ADRs) reported over 18 months with automated event detection^{1*}

8.7x
More ADRs identified than voluntary reporting alone¹

^{*}Compared to manual reporting



Event Communication

Strong safety event communication helps ensure the right people receive the right information at the right time, so events can be addressed quickly, and nothing slips through the cracks.

1 Automated event routing

Look for a solution that automatically assigns safety events to the appropriate investigators based on location, event type, and severity. Automated email notifications should keep the right team members informed and help move investigations forward quickly.

2 Automated email confirmation

Reporters should receive automated email confirmations after submitting an event, providing assurance that the report has been received and is being reviewed.

3 Automated event escalation

Automated escalations should notify investigators when configurable, predefined alert thresholds are met, or investigation deadlines are approaching. Notifications should also alert reporters and managers when reports are saved but not submitted, or when serious event classifications require immediate attention.

4 Communication templates

Predefined communication templates should make it easy to notify the appropriate team members, helping standardize communication while reducing manual effort.

5 Automated delivery of scheduled reports

Scheduled reports should be delivered automatically to authorized users, providing timely insights without requiring manual distribution.

“It’s been said that if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it. [...] I think without knowing how much harm you have that’s caused by the various types of events, you can’t effectively do a good job in addressing the things that are most important at your institution.”

Dr. David Westfall Bates
Medical Director of Clinical and Quality Analysis, Mass General Brigham; Chief of General Internal Medicine, Brigham and Women’s Hospital



Event Analysis and Investigation

To support continuous safety improvement, your safety reporting system should make it easy to analyze safety events, investigate root causes, and measure the impact of corrective actions.

1 Analysis tools

Look for a solution that includes event analysis tools to transform health data into a clearer understanding of trends and gaps. Features such as timelines, cause mapping, solution maps, fishbone diagrams, the Five Whys, and gap analysis can help leaders identify trends, prioritize safety and quality initiatives, and drive improvement. Additional review tools should support sentinel event reports, root cause analysis, and Joint Commission reporting forms.

3 Report tracking

Authorized users should be able to review reported events, monitor investigation status, and track progress on associated action plans.

5 Enterprise-level reports

Users should be able to create and export tables, pivot reports, and charts to analyze safety data across the organization or by individual facility or location.

7 Automated record documentation

Activity associated with each event record should be documented automatically, including record views, patient searches, updates, and other changes. This helps maintain a complete chain of custody and provides visibility into when changes were made and by whom.

2 Action plans and results

Users should be able to create action plans, assign follow-up tasks, and measure the effectiveness of corrective actions over time.

4 Configurable dashboards

Users should be able to customize dashboards based on the data and visualizations most relevant to their role, while executive dashboards provide presentation-ready insights for leadership and key stakeholders.

6 Search features

Powerful search capabilities should make it easy to find events by patient name, MRN, Patient ID, event type, date, keyword, location, or open incident, helping investigators and administrators work more efficiently.





Scalability and Collaboration

The most effective safety event reporting systems grow with your organization, supporting new initiatives while helping strengthen a culture of continuous improvement.

1 Expansive capabilities

Choose a solution that can scale as your organization's needs evolve. A broader platform that includes risk mitigation, compliance management, patient relations and service recovery, and audit management can help extend the value of your safety event reporting system while reducing organizational risk and improving operational efficiency.

2 Proven expertise

Look for a vendor with a proven track record of supporting healthcare organizations through changing priorities and evolving safety initiatives. Customer references and long-term partnerships can provide valuable insight into the vendor's experience and ability to deliver lasting value.

3 Comprehensive protection

Your safety event reporting solution should integrate easily with the EHR and work alongside clinical surveillance software to provide broader visibility into patient safety. Together, these technologies help identify trends, surface close calls and serious harm events, and reduce reliance on manual reporting alone.

4 Collaboration

Choose a vendor that works as a long-term partner, collaborating with customers to solve new challenges, refine workflows, and continuously improve the solution over time.

Questions to Ask Your Current Vendor

As you evaluate your current safety event reporting system, ask these questions:

- How long does it take staff to report a safety event?
- How much information must be entered manually?
- Do investigators have to leave the system to gather patient records or supporting information?
- How are near misses identified if they aren't voluntarily reported?
- Can potential safety events be detected automatically, or do they rely entirely on staff reporting?
- How quickly are the right people notified when a serious event occurs?
- Does the platform support additional capabilities like Risk Mitigation, Compliance Management, Patient Relations and Service Recovery, and Audit Management as your needs evolve?

If these questions reveal gaps in your current approach, it may be time to rethink what your safety event reporting system should deliver.

Get Ahead of Harm With Inovalon

Choosing the right safety event reporting solution is about giving your teams the visibility and support they need to spend less time managing events and more time improving patient safety.

Inovalon's [VigiLanz Safety Management™](#), a configurable platform for identifying, reporting, investigating, and communicating patient safety events. It brings together the capabilities covered throughout this guide in a single solution designed for inpatient and outpatient organizations.

With earlier insight into safety events and less time spent on manual processes, your teams can focus on investigating risks, driving improvement, and strengthening a culture of safety.

Connect with our clinical experts to see how Inovalon can help your organization get ahead of harm.

Connect with our clinical experts today.

Connect With an Expert



Inovalon is a leading provider of data and solutions empowering data-driven healthcare. The Inovalon ONE® Platform brings together national-scale connectivity, real-time primary source data access, and advanced analytics into a sophisticated cloud-based platform empowering improved outcomes and economics across the healthcare ecosystem. The company's analytics and capabilities are used by over 50,000 active, licensed customers. For more information, visit www.inovalon.com.

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