



## 1199SEIU LEAGUE LABOR MANAGEMENT PROJECT

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### **HAND WASHING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED INFECTIONS – CRUCIAL . . . BUT SIMPLE?**

Robert DeLauro

Healthcare-associated infection is a major issue for hospitals. It is estimated that overall direct medical costs of healthcare-associated infections for US hospitals are up to \$45 billion each year. Hand hygiene is widely recognized as the single most effective means of reducing healthcare-associated infections.

Determined to make New York hospitals industry leaders in the prevention of HAIs, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East (1199SEIU), Greater New York Hospital Association (GNYHA) and the 1199SEIU Training and Employment Funds (TEF), embarked on a collaborative “Infection Prevention Campaign” (IPC) beginning in late 2007.

With the support of these sponsors, managers and staff, as well as 1199SEIU delegates, were trained in proper hand hygiene techniques to eliminate and prevent hospital-acquired infections. In addition to clinical information, campaign participants were provided with coaching and communication training to influence peers to comply with hand hygiene protocol. These individuals were called Infection Prevention Coaches.

The success of this Infection Prevention Coach approach is contingent on two ideas:

- (1) IMMEDIACY - As front-line staff, coaches are in the best position to observe when and how hand washing is (or is not) being performed during the course of “real time” patient care.
- (2) RELATIONSHIPS - Peers are in the most effective position to use interpersonal social pressure and a personal relationship to be influencers.

This workshop will examine the activity of the Infection Prevention Coach as the role is currently defined. We will hear from various coaches to get a candid and realistic picture of what they do to improve hand washing compliance and how effective they are. We will clarify what coaching techniques have been effective and what are the coach’s primary challenges. For example, coaching interventions are often met with resistance when perceived as “policing”.

The workshop will also consider the skills and qualities necessary to be a truly effective IP Coach and what type of training and ongoing support are required to prepare and retain successful coaches. In addition, the lessons that coaches have learned about the reasons healthcare workers do not follow hand hygiene protocol will be discussed. What can we learn from their experiences to improve infection prevention efforts? To what extent is hand washing non-compliance a result of ignorance, laziness or apathy?

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The workshop will include a powerpoint presentation about what we have learned about how to improve hand-washing compliance. Also, there may be a video.

There will be two panels, one consisting of Infection Control Practitioners and another of experienced Infection Prevention Coaches. They will address some of the challenges of improving hand-washing compliance in hospitals and the effectiveness of coaching for this improvement.

I plan to have Infection Prevention Practitioners and Infection Prevention Coaches from St. Lukes, Roosevelt, Jamaica, Flushing, Montefiore and St. Barnabas.