

[Michigan Medicine Headlines](#) > [Our Employees](#)

How one unit treasures patient safety

October 27, 2016 // FOUND IN: [Our Employees](#), [Top Story](#)



Members of Children’s Emergency Services pose with the treasure chest after recently being named UMHS’ top performing unit when it comes to hand hygiene compliance.

Kelly Baird-Cox takes a lot of pride in the work performed by Children’s Emergency Services. The nurse manager’s team provides top-notch patient care in a high-stakes environment.

That’s why her unit has become laser-focused on improving their hand hygiene compliance numbers.

“Our colleagues across UMHS are so skilled and so bright,” Baird-Cox said. “And that incredible work should never be overshadowed by our department having an issue with hand hygiene, which is such a critical aspect of patient care.”

To that end, Baird-Cox and others in CES began devising a game plan to see their hand hygiene compliance numbers rise.

The work has paid off, as CES was recently lauded as the highest performing unit at UMHS when it comes to hand hygiene. In recognition, the group was the first to be awarded a treasure chest by Infection Prevention and Epidemiology. The chest — filled with chocolate, candy and other goodies — will be presented to the health system’s top performing unit every month.

So how did CES find success? Baird-Cox points to four major strategies:

- **Communicate often:** CES has a policy that hand hygiene is discussed at every shift huddle. This includes talking over the latest compliance numbers, sharing success stories or solving issues associated with barriers that hinder full compliance.
- **Gain cooperation from leadership:** When the unit’s hand hygiene initiative began in the summer of 2015, Baird-Cox made sure leaders were on board. “We brought in leadership from every unit that works in CES — doctors, EVS members, radiologists and others. We wanted to let them know what our plans were and make sure they helped encourage employees,” Baird-Cox said. “Their work and positive feedback has been monumental to our success.”
- **Add the personal touch:** It wasn’t enough for Baird-Cox to simply tell her employees to wash their hands, she wanted to show her employees why doing so is critical. During huddles and other meetings, employees heard stories from patients and their families, talking about how hand hygiene could have made a difference in their hospital care. “Talking to families, that made this more personal,” Baird-Cox said. “It gave everyone a stake in the process.”
- **Work together:** The most effective tip implemented by CES was creating a culture where staff members hold each other accountable. Every four hours, a rotating team member is tasked with observing hand hygiene in the unit. If someone forgets to wash their hands heading into or out of a patient room, the observer points it out with real-time feedback. “Having staff hold each other accountable and having them see how easy it is to forget to wash, you can’t put a price on that,” Baird-Cox said.

Baird-Cox did have one final piece of advice to units working on hand hygiene compliance: The work is never done.

“Using these strategies, we’ve figured out some ways to keep our compliance rates up,” Baird-Cox said. “But now it’s just as important to sustain our progress. That’s what I’m focused on.”

Could any of these tips work in your unit? If you’d like more information about hand hygiene and to find out how you can help encourage compliance across UMHS, visit the [infection prevention website](#).



RELATED STORIES