

Root Cause Analysis: A Simple Guide

What is Root Cause Analysis

A team-based way to understand what happened, why it happened and how we can prevent it from happening again.

RCA focuses on fixing systems and processes, not blaming individuals.

Think of RCA as learning from events so we can make our work safer and better.



When Should We Use RCA?



Serious harm or death
(adverse or sentinel
events)



Near misses/close
calls (something
almost went wrong)



Repeated problems
(same issue keeps
occurring)



Patterns or trends
(e.g. many falls at the
same time of day)



Performance gaps
(policies or plans of
care not followed)

RCA is **NOT** needed when:

- The issue was one-time minor and unlikely to happen again
- The problem can be fixed right away and is not part of a larger pattern

What RCA Is and Is Not

RCA Is



A team effort



Focused on how systems and
processes work



Non-punitive (not about blame)



A way to prevent future harm

RCA Is Not



About finding someone at fault



A quick fix



Done by one person alone



A process used to document
assumptions