Measuring hand hygiene compliance: Best practices for direct observation

- **Train observers**
  Train observers on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) *5 Moments for Hand Hygiene* poster and WHO’s Hand Hygiene Training Films, as well as the slides that accompany the training films. Also have observers practice conducting observations while a lead observer or infection prevention manager gives them feedback.

- **Assess inter-rate reliability**
  Assess inter-rate reliability (the degree to which observers agree) routinely to ensure consistency of data collection. In its simplest form, observers can conduct direct observations together and compare results. A lead observer could also accompany observers to reinforce consistent results.

- **Conduct direct observations**
  Conduct direct observations using the WHO’s Data Collection Tool or a modified version, like John Hopkins’ Medicine Monitoring Tool.
  
  *If observing manually, remember the following:*
  - Complete the top part of the header before commencing observation (except end time and duration).
  - A session should last no more than 20 minutes.
  - Record HHOs in the appropriate column and fill in the square corresponding to the indications for hand hygiene detected.
  - Record hand hygiene events or HHEs (or hand hygiene actions) observed or missed for each indication.
  - Record glove use only when a hand hygiene event is missed while the healthcare worker is wearing gloves.
  - At the end of the session, record end time and duration.

- **Compile the data**
  Compile data from each observation form onto a master database. To determine the compliance rate for specific periods of time, aggregate the total number of hand hygiene events for a given period and divide the value by the total number of HHOs within that same period.

- **Graph performance**
  Create performance graphs and appropriate reports to share within your unit and among your organization’s leadership.

- **Give feedback**
  Give frontline staff feedback. Frontline workers should be provided with performance feedback as immediate as possible after reports have been created.

- **Develop action plans**
  Create action plans for improving performance. Each unit and department should be responsible and accountable for action plans to remove unit- or department-specific barriers and obstacles to proper hand hygiene behavior.