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Client Alert: Celebrating National Compliance Officer Day: Practical Tips to Strengthen Your Compliance Program

Today, we take a moment to recognize the vital role compliance officers play in keeping organizations running smoothly and ethically. Compliance work is not easy, and those who do it deserve our gratitude for navigating complex regulations, protecting patients and staff, and ensuring that organizations stay on the right path.

In celebration of National Compliance Officer Day, we've put together a few practical tips to help strengthen your compliance program and keep it moving forward:

1. **Documentation is everything.** Create, maintain, and be able to efficiently retrieve documentation. The organization as a whole must do this to prepare for audits, investigations, and potential litigation. Documentation is critical for the Compliance Department. As the saying goes in health care, "If it's not documented, it didn't happen."
2. **Keep your annual work plan current.** Regularly create and update your compliance work plan. Report on your progress to the Compliance Committee and make sure you document that reporting.
3. **Self-evaluate.** Take time each year, or at a minimum of every other year, to review your program, including work plans, policies, and corrective action plans. This is a great opportunity to ask yourself how mature your Compliance Program really is. Partner with your Legal Department for this review. If you'd like a copy of Shumaker's Maturity Self-Evaluation form, please email Grant Dearborn, Mara Rendina, or Aerin West.
4. **Leverage risk assessments.** Yearly, document a risk assessment for compliance matters and update your annual work plan using those findings. As the new year approaches, use the prior year's risk assessment and work plan results to guide your upcoming plan.
5. **Meet regularly and listen.** Set aside time to meet with your peers in Human Resources, Legal, Quality,

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and other departments on a regular basis, ideally quarterly. These meetings should focus on open dialogue, listening to concerns, and identifying ways to support compliance efforts across the organization. When leaders actively listen, it helps build trust, uncover issues early, and create a stronger culture of compliance.

6. **Apply compliance principles consistently.** Policies and expectations must be applied equally across the organization to promote fairness and transparency. For example, a conflict-of-interest policy should apply to everyone, from the CEO to frontline staff, so that there is a shared understanding of accountability at all levels. It is essential that policies and expectations are enforced uniformly and without exception, regardless of an employee's position or level within the organization. This helps ensure fairness, transparency, and integrity throughout the organization.

We are grateful for the dedication and expertise compliance officers bring to their work every day. If you'd like to learn more about strengthening your compliance program or have questions, please contact a member of Shumaker's Health Law team.