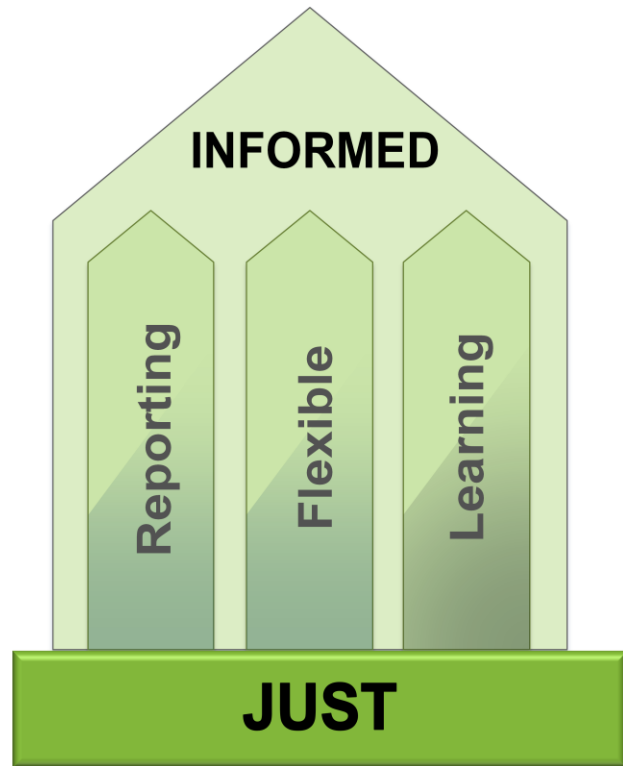


# What is a “Just Culture”?

**Just culture** is fairly balancing an understanding of system failure with professional accountability.

Also known as **psychological safety**, it is a culture where people believe they can question existing practices, express concerns, and admit mistakes without ridicule or punishment.

Just culture is one of the key components of a safety culture.



**Figure: Components of a patient safety culture**

The Canadian Medical Protective Association recognizes the following as important elements of a just culture<sup>1</sup>:

- Main focus of safety issues analysis is identifying system failures and to the extent possible correcting them.
- Organization accepts appropriate responsibility and accountability. Individuals are not held accountable for system failures over which they have little or no control.
- Healthcare providers are able to trust that the initial responses to an adverse event, as well as any subsequent analyses and proceedings, will be conducted with **fairness, within the legislative and legal frameworks, and in accordance with established policy and/or bylaws**. The rights of all people, including patients, are protected.
- Relevant policies and procedures to support quality improvement are understood by providers and followed by leadership/management.
- Providers are confident of the organization’s response to an adverse event, which appropriately protects quality improvement information from legal, regulatory or other proceedings.
- Organization does not tolerate intentionally unsafe actions, reckless actions, disregard for the welfare of patients or staff, or other willful misconduct and misbehaviour.
- There is “a collective understanding of where the line should be drawn between blameless and blameworthy actions.”
- Disclosure of adverse events to patients is important and patients are provided factual information.
- Providers are appropriately supported, protected and educated.

<sup>1</sup> Learning from adverse events: Fostering a just culture of safety in Canadian hospitals and health care institutions. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Medical Protective Association; 2009.