

STRENGTHENING TEAM-BASED CARE THROUGH IMPROVED COMMUNICATION AND SAME-DAY SCHEDULING

Introduction and Background

Effective team-based care depends on seamless collaboration, yet communication gaps and scheduling inefficiencies often hinder workflows and patient outcomes. Common challenges include lack of real-time and delayed communication, difficulty scheduling same-day appointments for urgent/follow-up needs, and workflow bottlenecks. Standardized tools and processes can enhance coordination, reduce delays, and streamline care.

Objectives

- Implement standardized communication tools to improve provider coordination.
- Develop efficient same-day scheduling workflows to reduce patient wait times.
- Reduce care delays and improve interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Increase provider satisfaction by minimizing administrative burdens.

Methodology Model for Improvement/PDSA cycle

- **Data Collection:** Evaluate provider communication response times and record relevant scheduling metrics to identify inefficiencies.
- **Template Development:** Facilitate discussions among provider(s) to help design suitable communication templates.
- **Scheduling Process Development:** Work with staff to define appropriate patient visits for same-day access and streamline process for scheduling
- **Pilot:** Implement the finalized templates and scheduling processes for all patients of one provider for a limited period (two to three months)
- **Clinic-Wide Rollout:** Expand Pilot to include all patients of all clinic providers
- **Ongoing Improvements:** Measure progress and modify as needed

Implementation Process

Phase 1

- **Step 1- Workflow Evaluation:** Conduct a workflow analysis and provider survey to identify communication challenges.
- **Step 2 -Template and Process Development:**
 - Facilitate discussions among provider(s) to help design internal referral, email, text message templates that provides all team members with relevant and required information.
 - Establish expectations around acknowledgement / response and consultation reports.
 - Work with staff to develop a guideline for the type of patient visits (urgent, acute, etc.) that qualifies for same-day access for each type of provider
 - Share the templates with all stakeholders to ensure visibility and alignment
- **Step 3- Pilot:** Select a small cohort of providers whose patients will participate in the pilot for a limited period (3 to 4 months)
 - Ensure all providers and clinical team members are familiar with the communication templates (referral, email, text message) as well as with the expectations related to acknowledgement / response, consultations and related reporting.
 - Provide training to staff members to ensure standardize triage of patients for same day appointments for each provider type.
 - Develop and implement feedback forms to patients and providers to measure satisfaction and identify gaps that remain to be addressed.

Phase 2

- **Step 4- Clinic Wide Roll Out:**
 - Develop process documents that can be shared with all providers
 - Provide training and support for all stakeholders regarding communication templates and scheduling procedures
 - Expand pilot's cohort to include all patients of all clinic providers
 - Develop feedback mechanism to identify challenges and remaining hurdles quickly
 - Establish protected time for regular touchpoint between a lead provider and staff as well as between all providers to discuss issues and surface solutions
- **Step 5- Ongoing Improvements:** periodically ask stakeholders to fill feedback forms and satisfaction surveys to help identify what is going well and where things can be improved.

Anticipated Time Needed

- Approximately 20-34 hours

Highlights of Outcomes (To be filled by NP)

***Example outcomes:**

- *All stakeholders involved in the pilot were satisfied with the referral and email templates*
- *Provider satisfaction surveys showed all stakeholders were at least somewhat satisfied with process.*
- *Over 80% of patients qualifying for same day appointments received one. This was a significant improvement over baseline.*

Impact and Sustainability (To be filled by NP)

***Example:** *The communication templates are now standard practice for all stakeholders and part of clinic orientation. Same day scheduling criteria has increased provider satisfaction and will be reviewed regularly by staff and lead provider.*