



Office staff can affect health outcomes and overall satisfaction with their patients by focusing on improving communication, building trust and meeting the patients' physical and emotional needs. This leads to better health outcomes and more positive patient satisfaction scores.

Patients' satisfaction with their healthcare is measured by the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS). This survey asks patients to report on their experiences and the care they receive in their doctors' office and other healthcare settings. By encouraging patients to respond to the survey, providers can gain valuable information on what is being done well, where improvements are needed and progress made over time.

Best Practices to Improve Care Coordination

Care Coordination

CAHPS Asks: "In the last six months..."

When you visited your personal doctor for a scheduled appointment, how often did he or she have your medical records or other information about your care?

How often did you and your personal doctor talk about the prescription medicines you were taking?

How often did your personal doctor seem informed and up to date about the care you got from specialists?

When your physician ordered a blood test, X-ray or other test, how often did someone from your personal doctor's office follow up to give you those results?

Did you get the help you needed from your personal doctor's office to manage your care among these different providers and services?

Recommended Best Practices

At each visit, review with patients:

- Their medical history
- Prescription medications they are taking
- Lab results
- Specialty care they've received and any recommendations from specialists

If lab work is ordered, let patients know who will contact them with results and when. Tell patients they can call the office to check on results.

Encourage patients or their caregivers who are comfortable with computers and the internet to use patient portals to manage their care.

Office Staff Training

Coordinating Care for Senior Patients (cont.)

Getting Appointments and Care Quickly

CAHPS Asks: “In the last six months...”

When you needed care right away, how often did you get care as soon as you thought you needed it?

Not counting the times when you needed care right away, how often did you get an appointment for your healthcare at a doctor’s office or clinic as soon as you thought you needed?

How often did you see the person you came to see within 15 minutes of your appointment time?

Recommended Best Practices

Assist patients in making timely urgent and non-urgent appointments in these ways:

- Set aside several appointment times every day to accommodate urgent visits.
- Give patients information on scheduling appointments:
 - Numbers to call
 - How to use patient portal
 - Making appointments with NP or PA
 - Encourage patients to make their next appointment before they leave the office

When making a referral, explain the process to patients, including what they can expect to happen next and when.

Check in with patients every 15 minutes and let them know how soon their doctor will be available. This will help decrease anxiety. If you expect a longer than usual wait time, explain the reason for the delay and engage patients in conversation. For example, measure vital signs and discuss issues related to the Health Outcome Survey, such as urinary incontinence, fall risk, mental health and physical activity.

Getting Needed Care

CAHPS Asks: “In the last six months...”

How often was it easy to get appointments with specialists?

How often was it easy to get the care, tests or treatment needed through your health plan?

Recommended Best Practices

Set expectations for timely specialty referrals and availability of urgent and routine specialty appointments.

Make available alternative ways for patients to access care, such as a 24-hour nurse advice line, an e-portal with self-service capabilities and urgent care locations.

Set aside appointments to accommodate patients recently discharged from a facility.

Establish a new-patient onboarding program that explains the referral process access to care, including urgent care.