

Global Measures

Essential Behaviors to Improve the Patient Experience

Q. Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst provider possible and 10 is the best provider possible, what number would you use to rate this provider?

- **Conclude each encounter by thanking the patient for choosing your practice.** Show appreciation for the patient's business. Each interaction with a patient, whether in person or by phone or email, is an opportunity to build loyalty and trust and to show compassion.
- **Speak positively about all members of the care team as well as about the organization.** Tout the organization's strengths in front of patients and their family members.
- **Use body language that conveys compassionate, connected care.** For example, sit at eye level and maintain eye contact with a patient during any discussion about his or her treatment.
 - Keep in mind that in a given interaction, body language has a greater impact than the words said.
- **Empathize with patients.** Providers see many patients come through the office every day, but regardless of how many patients come and go, each patient deserves to be treated as an individual rather than as a diagnosis or another case. Display empathy to patients by doing the following:
 - **Acknowledge their suffering, pain, and discomfort.** For example, "I'm sorry you are in pain."
 - **Recognize that anxiety is suffering and that it presents in many forms,** whether from pain, the anticipation of test results, concern for health care costs, fear of a procedure, etc.
 - **Train on how to validate, rather than ignore or challenge, stress and emotions that are presented.** When the patient expresses concern, offer empathic responses such as: "I can understand," or "I hear this is an inconvenience."

Q. Would you recommend this provider's office to your family and friends?

- **Be someone who truly cares about the patient more than the illness.** Find out what the patient likes and ask them about it when they come in. For example, "Mr. Stevens, do you still play softball?"
- **Ask about the patient's family or support system.** Show concern about their needs as well.
- **Speak highly of all staff.** Any negative comments about other team members reflect poorly on the whole practice. Avoid throwing colleagues "under the bus" when something goes wrong.
- **Speak positively about the organization.** Tout the organization's strengths in front of patients and their family members.
- **Thank patients for choosing your health system.**
- **Invite patients to share details about the things they love.** Use that information to make their experience at your practice extra special.
- **Universally commit to a set of customer service standards** and include standards related to meeting the needs of internal customers.
 - Standards are specific and measurable. The categories below contain examples of behavior standards for care team members.
 - Upon entering the exam room: knock on the door and obtain permission prior to entering, greet

the patient by name, acknowledge family/friends, wash hands, etc.

— **Communication standards:**

- use a calm tone of voice,
- update patients a minimum of every 15 minutes during delays
- verbalize privacy
- ask patients which questions they want to discuss before the end of the visit
- always explain what you are doing and why,
- maintain eye contact when talking
- sit down when talking to patients,
- utilize the teach-back method when discussing follow-up care or medications,
- involve patients in every possible decision by asking their preferences/opinions (for new medication, timing of procedures, etc.), etc.

— **Closure standards:**

- ask about concerns,
- use available and relevant written materials in conjunction with the discussion,
- use the teach-back method to confirm comprehension,
- thank patients for their business, etc.

- **Ongoing reinforcement of expected staff behaviors** is essential for sustainable processes. Staff should be rewarded for positive, compliant behaviors and coached when behaviors do not align with expectations. Ongoing non-compliance should *not* be acceptable.
- **Use staff meetings to reinforce standards.** Use simulation labs to evaluate the execution of standards.