

# Communication Management

Ensuring communication between patients and the practice is efficient, timely, and accessible.

## Key Changes

- **Develop** standard work for handling major forms of communications.
- **Set aside** time for staff to do same-day message management as part of standard work.
- **Designate** and **train** staff to handle common types of communications.
- **Maximize** first call/contact resolution to eliminate or at least minimize queues and handoffs.
- **Ensure** necessary handoffs are efficient.
- Routinely **monitor** demand and the extent to which communication goals are met.
- **Reduce** the volume of incoming messages by ensuring clear communications with patients, families, and caregivers.

## Examples

- Have explicit goals, designated staff, and standard work in place for the monitoring of initial action for each request or message type.
- Develop measures for communication standard work such as first contact resolution and share with staff and patients.
- Designate a person responsible for form completion (e.g. prior authorization requests, vaccination requests, camp signoffs, workers comp, etc.)
- PDSA workflows for form completion.
- Let patients know who on the care team can help them get their questions answered.
- Try using a scribe to document notes in the EHR during the patient visits to improve clinician eye contact and communication with patients and family.
- Reduce the need for telephone triage and handoffs by ensuring same day access.
- Set aside time for everyone on the team to respond to non-face-to-face request for care.
- Use PDSA cycles to experiment with phone care when requested by the patient and clinically appropriate.
- Regularly track and when necessary adjust panel size and supply and demand to ensure folks can get access to care.
- Use a patient portal to facilitate accessible communication.
- Develop processes that assist patients and family members in learning how to use portal functions.
- Create clear roles for the team to manage portal messages from patients.
- Create standing orders and protocols around common communication issues like medication refills and normal and abnormal lab results.
- Consider alternative visit types including virtual consultations/telehealth.

Search [ImprovingPrimaryCare.org](https://www.ImprovingPrimaryCare.org) for more resources

## Primary Care Team Guide Assessment-Related Questions

### Communication Management

|    | Components  | Level D   | Level C   | Level B  | Level A  |
|----|---|---|---|--|--|
| 25 | Contacting the practice team during regular business hours... | is difficult.<br><br>1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/>                     | depends on the practice's ability to respond to telephone messages.<br><br>4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> | is accomplished by staff responding by telephone within the same day.<br><br>7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/>                    | is accomplished by providing a patient a choice between email and phone interaction, utilizing systems which are monitored for timelines.<br><br>10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26 | Test results and care plans...                                | are not communicated to patients.<br><br>1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> | are communicated to patients based on an ad hoc approach.<br><br>4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/>           | are systematically communicated to patients in a way that is convenient to the practice.<br><br>7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> | are systematically communicated to patients in a variety of ways that are convenient to patients.<br><br>10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/>   |

## How Primary Care Teams Achieve the Quadruple Aim

