

# PATIENT EXPERIENCE BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

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## ADULT

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**Steward**  
Health Care Network

The patient's experience requires more than giving great medical care – it demands a multi-faceted approach to addressing all of the patient's needs before, during, after and in-between their appointment(s) with their provider. From the moment the patient calls the practice for the first time to the wait time in the waiting room to seeing the provider, the patient's perception of their care is fundamental to a happy, compliant, long-term patient.

## **THE FOLLOWING IS A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE TO IMPROVING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE.**

On each page, you will notice the following:

1. One of the MHQP Patient Experience domains (on which we are measured).  
These domains correspond to the DSS Internal Survey domains.
2. The survey questions asked in that specific domain.
3. Best practices that can be implemented at various points of the patient's care, including which team member may be able to help contribute.
4. Suggested verbiage that can help guide the team in that best practice.

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### **What do I do now?**

1. Pick a practice patient experience champion. Who will “own” patient experience in your practice and lead the way for success?
2. Review your own practice's patient experience scores. Did you perform as well as you had hoped? Are you under-performing in a specific domain? Are you meeting your expectations, but still feel like there is opportunity for improvement?
3. Review the best practices guide. Start small. Pick one or two interventions that the practice/team all agree on and pick up speed with small early successes. Don't try to do it all the first week.
4. Determine how the best practices can fit into your current workflow, or change up your workflow to improve the patient's experience.
5. Share this best practices guide at team meetings, one-on-one with employees, with providers and managers. Coach all staff members to the tool.
6. Incorporate the suggested verbiage in your day-to-day conversation with patients.

**Need more help? Have questions?  
Contact your Local Chapter Performance Team for more assistance.**

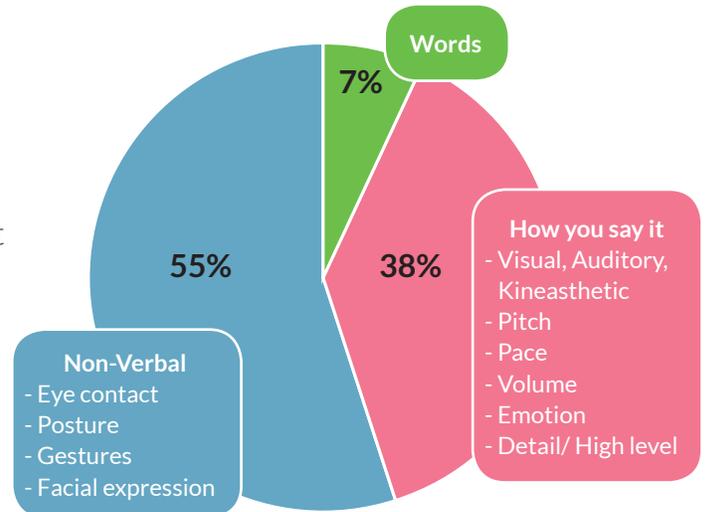
## COMMUNICATION: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

In the last 12 months, how often did this provider:

1. explain things in a way that was easy to understand?
2. listen carefully to you?
3. give you easy to understand information about these health questions or concerns?
4. give you easy to understand information about what to do if your health concerns or problems got worse or came back?
5. show respect for what you had to say?
6. spend enough time with you?

### DIFFERENT WAYS COMMUNICATION IS GIVEN TO PATIENTS



#### Opening of Visit

- Greet patients warmly and establish positive rapport immediately (Front Desk or Nursing Staff)
- Sit, lean in and adopt an open, receptive posture (Nursing Staff or Provider)
- Work together with the patient to set priorities for the time together (Nursing Staff or Provider)

#### During the Visit (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)

- When with a patient, make an effort to resist interruptions
- Pay undivided attention to the patient, instead of shuffling papers, typing, taking notes, or looking at the computer
- Acknowledge patient’s feelings in an empathetic way
- Avoid using acronyms and jargon, so patients can more easily understand

#### Close of Visit (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)

- Ask the patient and/or family member(s) if they have any further questions or concerns
- Ensure the patient has a clear plan from now until the next visit
- Make the last 6 seconds with the patient a positive memory—thank the patient for coming to your practice!

*It's a pleasure seeing you today!*

*We have about 20 minutes together; what do you feel are the most important priorities we cover?*

*I understand that this is difficult.*

*Is there anything I can help you with today?*

*Between now and your next visit, I'd like you to focus on exercising 3 times a week.*

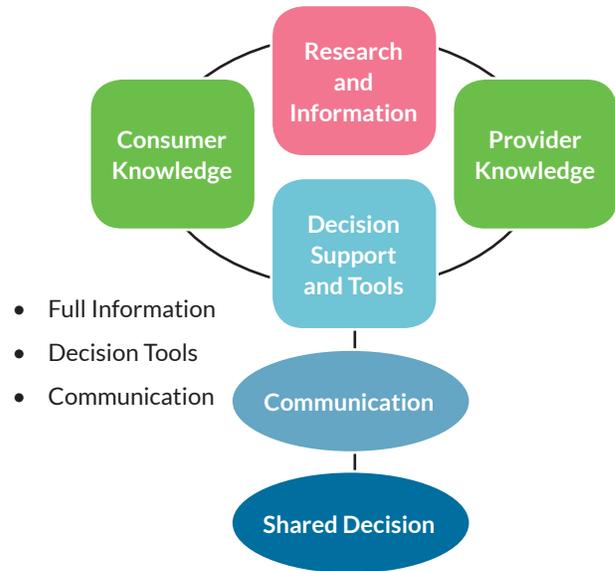
## SHARED DECISION MAKING: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

When you talked about starting or stopping a prescription medicine:

1. how much did this provider talk about the reasons you might not want to take a medicine?
2. did this provider ask what you thought was best for you?

### SHARED DECISION MAKING



### Shared Decision-Making

- Encourage the patient to speak freely about their concerns before intervening (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)
- Invite the patient’s ideas and viewpoints before making suggestions (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)
- Encourage questions (Nursing Staff or Provider)
- Make a concerted effort to engage the patient in decisions (Nursing Staff or Provider)
- Identify barriers in the treatment plan (i.e. cost) (Nursing Staff or Provider)
- Check the patient’s (and family member’s) understanding and comfort with next steps before ending the visit (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)

*Your input about your care is very important to me. Please feel free to share anything and everything with me.*

*What are your thoughts on taking this new medication?*

*Are you comfortable with our plan?*

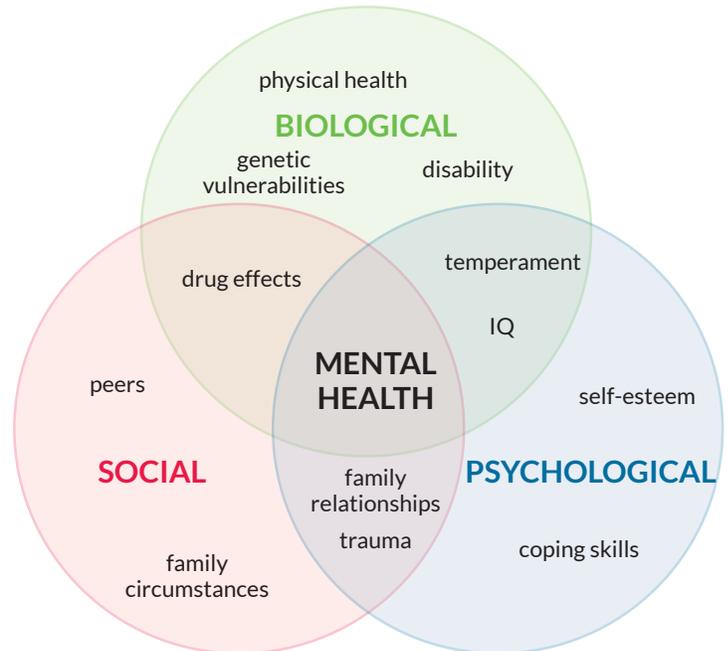
*Do you have any additional questions or concerns?*

## ADULT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

In the last 12 months, did anyone in this provider’s office:

1. ask you if there was a period of time when you felt sad, empty, or depressed?
2. talk about things in your life that worry you or cause you stress?
3. talk about a personal problem, family problem, alcohol use, drug use, or a mental or emotional illness?



### Adult Behavioral Health (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)

- Have open discussions with patients about difficult topics—communicate empathy for the patient’s feelings
- Encourage patients to share their feelings
- Explain to the patient clearly that the information they share will remain safe and confidential—you are there to help!
- Utilize a PHQ2 and/or 9 to assess for behavioral health
  - Front desk can give at time of check in (paper copy)
  - Nurse can give verbally once patient is roomed (EMR)

*I understand how you feel—  
I know that it’s difficult.*

*Do you have any thoughts on  
this or anything you’d like to  
share?*

*Anything you tell me stays  
between us, so please feel  
comfortable to share anything  
and everything with me.*

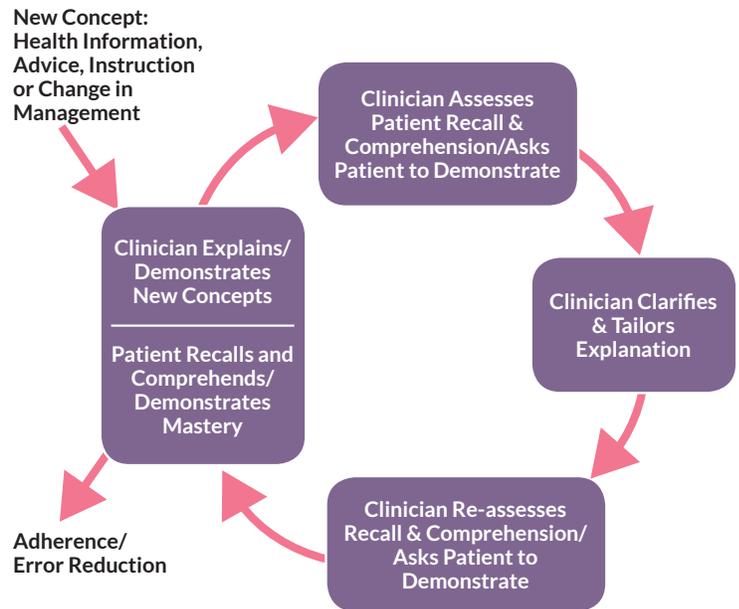
INTEGRATION OF CARE/KNOWLEDGE OF PATIENT: BEST PRACTICES

MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. In the last 12 months, how often did your provider seem informed and up-to-date about the care you got from specialists?
2. In the last 12 months, when this provider ordered a blood test, x-ray, or other test for you, how often did someone from this provider’s office follow up to give you these test results?
3. In the last 12 months, how often did this provider seem to know the important information about your medical history?
4. How would you rate this provider’s knowledge of you as a person, including values and beliefs that are important to you?

TEACH BACK/SHOW ME

Confirming Your Message is Understood



Integration of Care/Knowledge of Patient

- Before sitting down with a patient, prepare, so you can immediately show knowledge of the patient (Nursing Staff or Provider)
- Explain to the patient clearly how they will receive test results, so they leave with realistic expectations (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)
- Note any personal information about the patient in their medical chart—reference it when you greet them for a visit (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)
- Utilize a previsit planning process where the nursing staff reviews the patients chart 7-10 days prior to the patient’s appointment to determine what is needed at time of visit (Nursing Staff or Provider)
  - MD reviews previsit planning note prior to seeing patient
- Utilize the Teach Back method to ensure patient fully understands information being given (Nursing Staff or Provider)

*I reviewed your medical history. It’s wonderful that you had your annual mammogram. I noted that you are seeing your endocrinologist on a regular basis—that’s great!*

*We will call you with any abnormal results and will send a letter for normal results. Please feel free to call us if you have further questions.*

*How was the wedding you went to this summer?*

## ORGANIZATIONAL ACCESS: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. In the last 12 months, when you made an appointment for a check-up or routine care with this provider, how often did you get an appointment as soon as you needed?
2. In the last 12 months, when you called this provider's office during regular office hours, how often did you get an answer to your medical question that same day?
3. In the last 12 months, when you called this provider's office after regular office hours, how often did you get an answer to your medical question as soon as you needed?

### Organizational Access

- Block off time on the provider's schedule each week for sick visits/ last minute add on appointments (Front Desk or Office Manager)
- Create a "Cancellation List" and when you have openings, reach out to those patients to try and get them in (Front Desk or Office Manager)
- Implement a "Same Day Call Back" policy for patients—all patients should receive a call back by the end of the business day (Front Desk, Office Manager, or Nursing Staff)
- Train front desk staff on triaging calls to try and answer all non-medical questions and reduce the number of calls the nurses/ providers must call back (Front Desk)
- Train front desk staff on preparing patients for inevitable wait times (through customer service training) (Front Desk)
- Optimize provider's schedule to ensure appropriate amount of time is allotted to see the patient (different times for sick visit vs. well visit, etc.)
- After hours, have an answering service to triage patient calls and divert accordingly (non-emergency calls to office, emergency calls go to MD, Urgent Care or ED)

*Thank you for choosing our practice, \_\_\_\_\_. I did want to let you know that Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ does have a (give expected wait time). May I offer you some coffee, tea, water or a magazine while you wait?*

*Thank you again for being so patient. We look forward to seeing you again.*

## OFFICE STAFF: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

In the last 12 months, how often:

1. were the front office staff at this provider’s office as helpful as you thought they should be?
2. did the front office staff at this provider’s office treat you with courtesy and respect?

#### Office Staff

- Train front office staff on customer service skills
- Be sure they have the tools they need to handle a patient escalation
- Discuss customer service techniques at every team meeting
- Evaluate customer service

#### The Patient is the Focus

- Understand the customers issues and needs
- See the customers perspective
- Convey a sense of availability and responsiveness
- Emphasize a high priority on customer satisfaction

#### Front Desk: Sets the tone for the patient’s experience

- Smile and greet: Good morning/afternoon
- Use their name when addressing them
- Give enough attention so the patient feels important
- Utilize the art and etiquette of small talk
- Provide a personal touch

#### Telephone Etiquette

- Opening: Thank you for calling Dr. Smith’s office. How can I help you?
- Closing: Anything else I can help you with?
- Establish rapport with the caller
- Give the caller your full attention: Listen!
- Acknowledge the caller before putting on hold
- Ask the caller’s name and try to use it 3 times in the call
  - People like to hear their name and it adds a personal touch

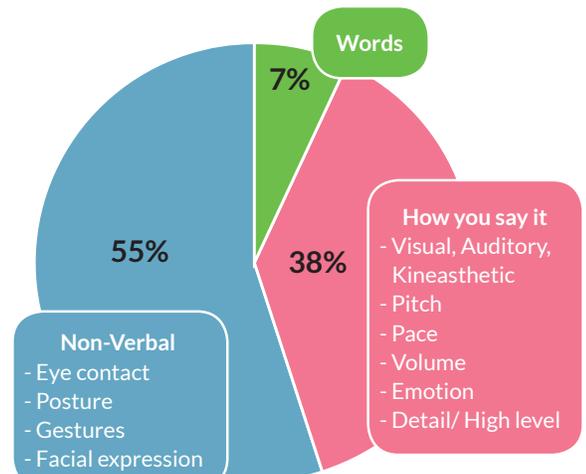
*Thank you for calling \_\_\_\_\_. How may I help you today?*

*I understand your frustration, \_\_\_\_\_. I would like to help you.*

#### Patient Escalation Tips:

- *Let caller be angry*
- *Don't be rude or angry*
- *Stay polite*
- *Offer alternatives*
- *Put yourself in their shoes*
- *Take the person out of view of others*

### DIFFERENT WAYS COMMUNICATION IS GIVEN TO PATIENTS

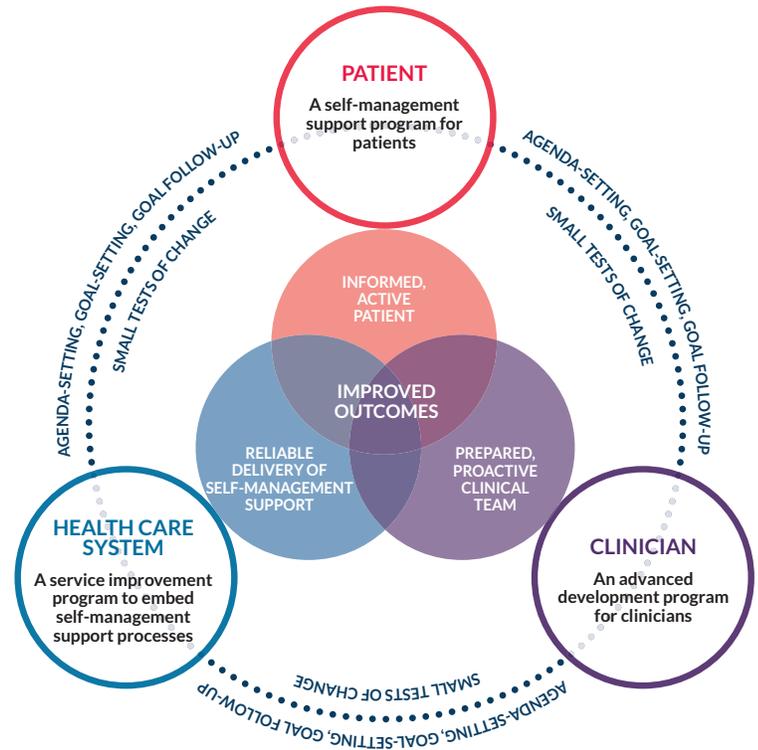


## SELF-MANAGEMENT SUPPORT: BEST PRACTICES

### MHQP SURVEY QUESTIONS

In the last 12 months:

1. did you and anyone in this provider’s office talk about specific goals for your health?
2. did anyone in this provider’s office ask you if there are things that make it hard for you to take care of your health?



### Self-Management Support (Front Desk, Nursing Staff, or Provider)

- Utilize all resources in the Network to support the patient
  - Care Management
  - Community Resources
- Be sure patients/parents leave with educational materials (paper or electronic) and resources (websites, support groups, etc.)
- Train all office staff on Self-Management tools to be successful, so they can contribute to coaching the patient

*I am going to refer you to our diabetes management program. They are very helpful at coaching you on everything you need to know about managing your diabetes.*

*We were discussing how you wanted to lose weight and I wanted to share with you this website Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ likes to show his patients—they have great tips for weight loss on there.*