

## Appointment Availability:

# Ten Ways You Can Improve Patient Satisfaction

Providing patients with quick access to care when they need it is one of the key steps to improving patient health outcomes. Think about it—if a patient is unable to visit your practice, how will you address his/her medical needs?

Below are some important ways in which you can improve appointment availability and patient retention while maximizing efficiency.

- 1 Manage Expectations:** Clear two-way communication with your patients is important to improving waiting room times, seeing more patients, and increasing Healthfirst Quality Incentive Program (HQIP)\* earnings. Your management of the gray area between patient expectations and reality will allow patients to accurately assess your performance relative to actual standards in place.
- 2 Utilize Open-Access Scheduling** (aka advanced access and same-day scheduling): Allocate time slots in your schedule to accommodate same-day and walk-in requests.
- 3 Create Patient-Centered Schedules:** Design your schedule to meet patient needs and consider adding expanded hours (before 9am and after 5pm) as well as weekend shifts.
- 4 Audit Daily Schedules:** Review your schedule every day and identify where extra slots can be created.
- 5 Confirm Appointments:** Utilize personal or automated confirmation calls or texts to reduce no-shows and miscommunication with the appointment time.

\*Contact your assigned Network Account Manager or Clinical Quality Manager to learn more about measures, rewards, and requirements associated with the Healthfirst Quality Incentive Program (HQIP).

- 6 Offer an Alternative:** Use our provider directory at [www.hfdocfinder.org](http://www.hfdocfinder.org) to locate a provider or an in-network Urgent Care Center that can accommodate the patient's request for an earlier appointment. Offer remote appointments and consultations to improve access and satisfaction for patients. They'll be able to reach you from anywhere instead of having to find time in their schedule that fits in with yours.
- 7 Implement Customer-Centered Approach:** Train your staff to offer alternative options instead of an appointment that might be several weeks away. Build a rapport with your patients, show you understand, and be polite.
- 8 Survey Patient Satisfaction:** Collect real-time data of patient satisfaction on a daily basis to help you and your team understand your patients' journey and experience within your practice. Conduct ongoing meetings with your staff to proactively identify root cause solutions.
- 9 Utilize Call Center Services:** Healthcare call centers can respond quickly to patients, reduce the burden on administrative staff, and help improve the patient experience. A quality call center works with patients to make sure their experience is positive by using standard work flows and call scripting.
- 10 Use Words that Work:** Don't take no for an answer. If a patient is unable to come in based on initial availability, train your staff to have a conversation with patients to try to understand how to better accommodate their schedules.

To learn more about these strategies to improve appointment availability and patient retention, and to find helpful resources and links for both you and your patients, visit [www.healthfirst.org/PatientSatisfaction](http://www.healthfirst.org/PatientSatisfaction).