

The Patient Experience Post

Healthcare's Resource for
Service Excellence
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Since the mid-1990s, Baird has helped healthcare organizations nationwide improve the patient experience and enhance organizational culture. Baird's culture assessment and diagnosis include experience mapping, medical mystery shopping, and focus groups to reveal the real customer experiences within your organization. Using your patients' experiences, Baird and her team prescribe critical next steps for improving patient satisfaction and HCAHPS scores.

10 Tips for Training Staff on Service Recovery

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

The key to successful service recovery lies in creating an environment where employees feel prepared and empowered to handle whatever comes their way. Only when employees feel prepared and empowered will they be able to view a complaint as a true gift.

The following are 10 tips for training staff on service recovery:

1. Set the expectation that **everyone** is responsible for service recovery.
2. Help staff to **anticipate** customer needs and expectations by providing them with the [Baird Experience Mapping Tool](#). Ask them to map out the current patient experience and to identify strengths and weaknesses.
3. **Acknowledging** the patient's problem means working on great active listening skills. Define active listening and demonstrate the verbal and non-verbal elements involved in active listening, including eye contact, nodding, and validating by re-stating what the patient says.
4. Get staff involved in creating "never" statements. **Never statements** are things that should never be said to an angry patient. Each organization should develop their own list, but an example is, "It's not my job."
5. Stress the importance of **apologizing** and role play ways to say I'm sorry with empathy and sincerity.
6. **Identify the most common dissatisfies** in your organization. Use these examples to prepare role play scenarios. Engage staff in role playing and give feedback on the 5 essentials (anticipate, acknowledge, apologize, offer alternatives, make amends).
7. Help staff understand what **alternatives** they can offer to customers in the event of common issues.
8. Offer staff tools that they can use in **making amends**. Make sure that they know that gifts are not the same as making amends.
9. **Create a log** that will be used in all departments and train staff on how to record service recovery situations.
10. **Practice scenarios** in pairs. Ask staff to discuss what situations have taken them off guard in the past and to identify how to manage the situation with the tools just learned.

Have a process in place to train and coach staff on service recovery opportunities.

Most healthcare organizations spend adequate resources training staff for what we know will be inspected, and leave the rest to chance. We manage to meet the state and federal requirements for in-service training but can't seem to fit some of the most fundamental training into the schedule. The cost of training is the most common barrier cited by managers and senior leaders. But when you calculate the cost of a lost customer, you will quickly realize the value of training your staff in service recovery. Not only does it help in raising customer satisfaction, it helps to raise employee satisfaction as well.

Providers who want to generate a following of raving fans must commit to ongoing training in service recovery. Most employees have a genuine desire to please the customer but often lack the skills to handle problems. Training and coaching can help increase staff confidence in handling conflict and resolving issues. In addition to training, the culture must support an empowering atmosphere that encourages line staff to solve problems quickly, honestly, and accurately.

One essential element of a good service recovery program is a practice of engaging staff in finding solutions to problems. Ask them for ideas about how problem situations can be prevented. Find out what has worked for them in the past and tap into their combined experience and expertise to build a service recovery process. In doing so, you will be fostering a culture of empowerment and ultimately service excellence.

Learn more about ways you can ensure that all of your customer interactions, including over-the-phone interactions, support your healthcare organization's brand, as in [Living Your Brand Promise](#), featuring Kent Seltman, co-author of Management Lessons From Mayo Clinic. As the former Director of Marketing at Mayo Clinic, Seltman was charged with managing the brand for this world-renowned organization. During this 90-minute presentation, you'll hear about crucial elements in aligning the brand promise with the patient experience in order to build trust and credibility with customers. For only \$89, you'll receive all this: pre-session worksheets, a session workbook, webinar slides, and an audio CD of the 90-minute webinar, complete with the Q&A session.

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*Nurse, author, and consultant Kristin Baird, "Healthcare's Customer Service Guru," is the author of *Raising the Bar on Service Excellence: The Health Care Leader's Guide to Putting Passion into Practice* (Golden Lamp Press, 2008), *Reclaiming the Passion: Stories that Celebrate the Essence of Nursing* (Golden Lamp Press, 2004), and *Customer Service In Healthcare: A Grassroots Approach to Creating a Culture of Service Excellence* (Jossey Bass, 2000).*