

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.

3 Keys to Success in 2015: Priority, People, Processes

by Kristin Baird, RN, BSN, MHA

As we move into 2015, the future of healthcare remains uncertain as the ACA continues to firmly take hold. There are some things we can count on though:

- Patients will remain our number one priority in terms of quality, safety, and service
- Cost control will remain top-of-mind, forcing healthcare organizations to deliver more with less
- Increasing patient choice will demand a focus on differentiation and the delivery of exceptional patient care

There are more specific influences as well. Earlier this month, Modern Healthcare ran an article about the potential of CMS applying CAHPS to children's hospitals. While many skeptics had hoped that HCAHPS would fade away, the opposite is true. Value based purchasing and CAHPS are here to stay.

Making 2015 the Year of the Patient Experience

As we move into the New Year, there are three specific things you can do to improve the patient experience in your organization and they're based on the 3 P's of Priority, People, and Processes.

1. **Priority:** Make sure you're articulating your focus on the patient experience. Your staff and physicians want to know, why this? And why now? Learn to address this issue through three lenses and speak the language of head, heart, and wallet. Head – Happy patients will recommend our organization and return. They will also speak positively about us. Heart – It's the right thing to do. Wallet – Reimbursement depends on our patient satisfaction.

Staff want to know what they need to do to ensure an exceptional patient experience. Set priorities, be specific, and keep in mind that reinforcing your focus isn't solely about the scores—it's about your culture and the systems, processes, and behaviors that impact the scores. It's also about ensuring that you are communicating the priority and your expectations clearly and frequently.

2. **People:** If an exceptional patient experience is a top priority, it needs to be aligned with hiring and evaluation processes. Further, it must be articulated at every level of the organization, from the top down in a culture of accountability. Senior leaders need to articulate the expectations and then hold other levels of the organization accountable to those expectations. That requires both speaking the language and setting the example—being visible and demonstrating

through words and deeds a visible commitment to the patient experience. Some things that will help here include:

- Doing executive rounds – with both staff and patients
- Integrating key messages into staff meetings and other communications
- Making sure to emphasize the culture of accountability in non-patient, as well as patient-care areas—all staff, whether in billing, central supply, or clinical departments, have customers. Even if you aren't in direct patient care, you are serving someone who is serving the patient.

3. Processes: Exceptional patient experiences won't occur by chance, they must be created by design. Have clear processes in place, not only to help staff know what is expected of them, but also to ensure timely and purposeful recognition for a job well done. Engaging the staff in finding solutions to problems means that there needs to be a process in place to share ideas and replicate the best of the best. That means creating processes, not one-time events. Some things that can help here:

- Committing processes to paper and computers so that staff have ready access to the materials and prompts they need to serve patients well
- Preparing tools to aid in rounding, service recovery, and other key processes
- Having a specific method in place for recognition and conducting regularly scheduled events focused on recognizing your high achievers

Priority, people, and processes are the three legs that can provide a solid foundation for your patient experience efforts. All three need to work together to ensure a culture of service that will resonate internally and externally. As you serve your staff, they serve your patients.

2015 is still in its infancy. Help your organization grow and thrive in the coming year by getting clear on your highest priorities and then placing a laser focus on an exceptional patient experience.

Happy New Year!

Phone communication is an essential part of the patient experience and is often the first part of the patient experience. In just seconds, your patients are deciding if you are friendly, knowledgeable, concerned, and willing to help. In fact, research shows that after just a 2-minute phone encounter, patients are clear about whether or not they would return to your organization or recommend it. Patients rely on phone encounters to make appointments and seek clinical advice. Other callers rely on phone encounters to gain vital information about a loved one. In both situations, it's important that you create a positive, trust-building experience. To engage



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your staff in essential phone skills, look toward the tips and tools in [You'll Have Them at "Hello": Phone skills that will WOW your callers every time](#). For only \$199, you'll receive the following: the video recording, presentation slides, a transcript of the recording, a participant guidebook, a moderator guidebook, a quality assurance tool, and additional handouts! This session is also available as a live training workshop.

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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). The Baird Group provides consulting, mystery shopping, and training services for improving the patient experience. To learn more, please visit <http://baird-group.com> or call 920-563-4684.