

Top 5 Tips for Improving Front-Office Customer Service



Some of your Health Partners Plans (HPP) patients may receive a telephonic survey about their recent experience at your office. As part of our Quality Care Plus (QCP) provider incentive program, this 10-question survey targets adult and pediatric Medicare and Medicaid members. It's designed to identify opportunities for improvement at provider office sites. Because the front-office staff serves an integral role in the patient experience, we want to learn how our members rate office visits. One of the survey questions asks:

Using a number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst possible and 10 is the best, what number would you use to rate just the receptionist and office staff?

As the front-office staff, embrace these tips to ensure you're focused and committed to providing exceptional customer service to all patients:

1 Make it personal.

Show patients they're more than just a number—they're family. Connect with patients by asking about loved ones. Be compassionate and empathetic. Consider cost-effective ways to strengthen connections with patients, like calling patients on important milestones or sending birthday cards.

2 Location reminders.

It might seem simple, but reminding patients of the location of an upcoming appointment is helpful. This reduces no-shows and helps ensure patients receive the care they need. Many patients—especially those with chronic conditions—have multiple appointments and might have trouble recalling the right time and location of each appointment. Help them get to your office on time with the added touch of a reminder.

3 Sharpen your listening skills.

Practice active listening by keeping an open mind and avoiding interrupting patients. And this goes for screen time, too. Focus more on patients than the computer or mobile device. Practice looking away from devices and making eye contact. Suggest solutions when they present a problem, for example:

Instead of: *"The doctor will call you back."*

Try: *"Do you mind providing a little more detail?"* or *"Could you tell me a bit more about that?"*

Getting more information over the phone can help resolve a patient's problem sooner and prioritize appointments for the sickest patients.

4 Practice empathy.

Navigating the health care system can be difficult and confusing, so it's no wonder patients sometimes lash out in frustration. Empathy can help diffuse a tense situation and patients are often less anxious when they are informed. When there's a long wait time, let patients know what you're doing to remedy the problem:

Instead of: *"I'm sorry for the long wait."*

Try: *"I'm sorry for the long wait, but we're trying hard to get back on schedule. This is something our office is working to address through better appointment scheduling."*

On days when appointments begin to fall behind because of an emergency, call incoming patients and let them know about the delay. Being transparent and keeping patients in the know shows them their time is just as valuable as yours.

5 Cultural sensitivity.

Understanding the differences among cultures is a critical component to making patients feel safe and respected. Take the time to learn how unique cultures impact patients' expectations and their approach to accepting and receiving care. A lack of cultural sensitivity can make a member feel less valued and untrusting of the advice or medical treatment he or she receives.

Language matters, too. Did you know that more than 60 million people living in the United States speak a language other than English in their homes, and 22 million speak only limited English? Help address language barriers by letting patients know medical interpreters, sign language interpreters and telephonic language services are available, free of charge, to facilitate communication.



[HPPlans.com/providers](https://www.hpp.com/providers)



Provider Services Helpline:
1-888-991-9023

