

Interdisciplinary Huddles

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An interdisciplinary huddle is an intentional space curated by professionals in a treatment team. These huddles function as a vehicle of communication for integrated care settings. When huddles are designed thoughtfully, they accelerate progress, help to identify issues, reinforce collaboration within the team, and streamline interventions to improve patient outcomes (Lin, et al., 2022) (Lin, S.P. et. al, 2022). In fact, research suggests that lack of communication among providers leads to medical errors and potential harm to the patient (Shaikh, 2020).

Design

Designing a huddle requires important considerations. The intentional use of the word huddle versus meeting or case staffing is a particularly important distinction. Meetings are typically spaces with a set agenda, a formal start and end, and inclusive of items for discussion that may or may not have resolution at that time. Similarly, case staffing has a defined focus that invites different members of a treatment team to thoroughly discuss a patient case(s) from their various perspectives.

Defining expectations of what this huddle would achieve and what the goal of the convenings would be is necessary. Designing a huddle involves selecting a small interval of time (no more than approximately 30 minutes) when the greatest number of team members may be available. Some clinics prefer to do morning huddles before the start of clinic day since finding mutual availability during the day may become more difficult. These brief and consistent gatherings are designed to be a debriefing with quick solutions to any problems that have arisen or any urgent information that needs to be communicated. For example, a huddle might communicate Patient A will be arriving and will need wheelchair access to this specific room. Or it could be an opportunity to share that Patient B, who has not attended therapy sessions in 3 months, will be arriving for their annual wellness exam- how can the team re-engage them in behavioral health services. To recap, in the design phase it will be especially important to select a small and consistent interval of time to meet with team members prior to appointments starting.



Implementation

During the implementation phase, you put the designed huddle into action. You may choose to invite team members personally after a conversation on the purpose and goal of the huddle; or speak to leadership to help reinforce attendance to these huddles. All members of the team should have the opportunity to give an update, raise an issue, or problem solve during the meeting, and to be brief and succinct. If the topic brought up seems to monopolize the huddle time, then you use the huddle to coordinate schedules and immediately schedule a meeting devoted to said topic.

Although it may seem that the huddles are “enough time” to get to know your fellow providers and build rapport – be intentional with carving out additional time for the team. Develop relationships among each other, and most importantly make sure that you all trust one another in the field. This will improve cohesion within the group and boost morale.

Evaluation

Consider evaluation of the huddles’ format and experience (for both staff and patient outcomes) as a continuous measure. After a few months, hold a meeting to discuss efficiency, necessary tweaks, and celebrate successes after implementing huddles at your clinic.

References:

October 6). The Effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Team Huddles in Healthcare Hospital-Based Setting. *Journal of multidisciplinary healthcare*, 15, 2241-2247. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2147/JMDH.S384554>

Shaikh, U. (2020, January 29). *Improving patient safety and team communication through daily huddles*. Retrieved from Patient Safety Network, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: <https://psnet.ahrq.gov/primer/improving-patient-safety-and-team-communication-through-daily-huddles>