



## Focusing on the Patient Experience

During this year's [Patient Experience Week \(April 25-29\)](#), all of us at the Partnership to Advance Tribal Health (PATH) want to say thank you for all you do to promote a caring environment for your patients. We celebrate all the health care staff, leaders, administrative support, maintenance teams, security staff and the many others who impact the patient experience every day. Thank you!

### *What is the patient experience?*

[The Beryl Institute](#) defines the patient experience as the **sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization's culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.**

### *Why is understanding the patient experience important?*

Patients with good care experiences often

- have better health outcomes,
- are more likely to trust their provider,
- are more successful in understanding their health care plan.

Health care teams who incorporate the patient perspective into their care have more adherent patients, often experience higher employee satisfaction and reduced staff turnover, and see better results in quality measures and patient outcomes ([United Healthcare 2022 Patient Experience Guidebook](#)).

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

Several reports point to patients not comprehending their care recommendations or action plans once they leave their appointment or upon discharge. Nationally, the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) reported that [only 52% of patients understand their care when they leave the hospital](#). The number of patients who understand their care decreases the more time passes from their discharge. [A recent study](#) found less than half of patients were able to recall provider recommendations one week after their appointment.

### *What can I do about it?*

There are strategies that health care teams can use during a patient visit or after the patient leaves the office to improve the patient experience and support high quality care.

#### **Tools to try during the visit**

[Clear communication](#) and ["verbal dominance"](#) by a provider impact the patient experience. The more the patient is included in the discussion of their care or is a part of decision-making, the more they recall of their care plan.

1. Encourage your patient to join the discussion.



- [Ask Me 3: Good Questions for Your Good Health](#)
- 2. Utilize [Teach-back](#) to communicate clearly, support patient comprehension, identify areas for further explanation, and ensure shared decision-making.
  - [Teach-Back: A Simple Technique to Enhance Patients' Understanding](#)
  - [The SHARE Approach – Using the Teach-Back Technique: A Reference Guide for Health Care Providers](#)

## Strategies to employ post-discharge

1. Ensure patient success post-discharge through purposeful discharge planning
  - [IDEAL Discharge Planning Overview, Process and Checklist](#)
  - [Be Prepared to Go Home Checklist](#)
2. Conduct follow-ups with patients once they are discharged. A follow-up within 2 days of discharge allows the healthcare team to identify and address any questions, concerns, or misunderstandings the patient, family, or caregiver may have.
  - [How to Conduct a Post-discharge Follow-up Phone Call](#)

## Story from the field

Do not underestimate the impact small actions can have in supporting a caring experience for the patient. Read below for a submitted quote from a caregiver on how it felt to receive simple updates during their stay and the importance of that follow-up phone call.



My son was seen in the ED on a Sunday after a hit during a hockey game. Someone from the hospital called me that Wednesday to see how he was doing and see if I had any questions. I was so surprised to hear from a real person and told the lady on the phone **how nice it was for them to take the time to make that call**. I never got the sense from that visit or the follow-up that their hospital is likely facing the same staffing shortages that many others are. **They kept us informed the whole time we were there**, even if the update was that we were waiting for more results. After recent experiences with family in a number of other health care facilities, **this small-town hospital was the winner in providing actual care.**

Surveying your patients on their experience is an important step to identifying and addressing gaps. Your PATH partners are happy to assist! Reach out to your local quality improvement advisor (QIA). If you have any feedback regarding IHS Patient Experience of Care Survey, please contact Benjamin Feliciano at [Benjamin.Feliciano@ihs.gov](mailto:Benjamin.Feliciano@ihs.gov).