



Improving the Patient Experience

Information and tips to enhance patient interactions

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Thank you for being an EmblemHealth partner. We appreciate your commitment to caring for our members every day.

While the health and well-being of our members has always been our priority, it's now more important than ever to ensure that together, we remove barriers and provide members with needed care.

To learn what EmblemHealth is doing to help you and your patients during this time, access our COVID-19 page from emblemhealth.com/providers.

Patient safety and COVID-19

Patients want to feel safe when they see their doctor. Consider doing one or more of the following to keep your patients and staff protected, and give them peace of mind:

- Conduct virtual visits, when possible.
- Schedule sick and well visits at different times or on different days; keep sick patients in separate areas of your office or designate separate locations for them.
- Deep-clean exam rooms between sick and well patients, and clean between all patient visits; clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when there is a possibility of infection.
- Set up tented or drive-through areas where you can provide routine care.
- Separate patients by spreading out appointments; add space between waiting room seating or keep patients outside until you are ready to see them.
- Give patients the option to complete paperwork before appointments and/or check-in remotely.

The importance of the patient experience

The health care industry continues to move toward performance-based care and compensation. That's why understanding the patient experience is increasingly essential for all providers.

Focusing on the patient experience can improve adherence to care and treatment plans, clinical outcomes, and patient safety. Also, patients who have a positive experience with their doctor are more likely to enjoy a long-term relationship with their provider and recommend them to others.

The CAHPS survey

The annual CAHPS (Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) survey is an important tool used to capture member experiences with their doctors and health plan. It is performed by a certified vendor on behalf of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH).

The survey focuses on a number of composite measures, including:

- Getting Needed Care
- Getting Appointments and Care Quickly
- Overall Rating of Health Care
- Care Coordination

Survey results can tell us whether we are meeting our members' needs — from providing access to care, to getting needed medications, to having a positive experience engaging with their doctor and health plan, and more.

As a valued provider in our network, we hope you will incorporate the following information and tips into the day-to-day operations of your practice to support our shared goals of a positive patient experience, strengthened relationships, and the delivery of high-quality care.

Access and availability

EmblemHealth Standards of Access and Availability ensure members receive timely, quality care from providers in our network. These standards are based on industry, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) access standards. They reflect our expectations in areas including phone hold/answer times, time frames for scheduling appointments, office wait times, and 24-hour accessibility, among others. Visit emblemhealth.com/providers/manual/access-to-care-and-delivery-system for a comprehensive list of our Standards of Access and Availability. Also, review the best practices below for tips to help your office meet these standards.

Recommended best practices

Consider implementing the following best practices.* They can help enhance patient care and interaction with your office from the time an appointment is made all the way through follow-up and next steps.

IMPROVE APPOINTMENT AVAILABILITY



- Keep a few slots open for same-day appointments.
- Extend office hours to accommodate evening and weekend appointments. Team up with a nurse hotline to give after-hours advice, when appropriate.
- Offer appointments with a nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or other in-network physician if you are unavailable.
- Offer virtual visits via video or phone for advice, diagnosis, and treatment, when appropriate.
- Schedule follow-up appointments before the patient leaves your office.
- Reduce delays associated with specialty referrals by partnering with other primary care providers and specialists to create a cohesive system of care.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PATIENTS



- Engage patients in shared decision-making. Together, select care paths that balance patient preferences and long-term outcomes.
- Encourage patients to write down what they want to cover in their visit, such as “What I want to tell my doctor” and “What I want to ask my doctor.”
- Review patients’ medications during each visit to ensure they are used and refilled as prescribed, and to prevent contraindications.
- Discuss any care and treatment received by other doctors.
- Ask patients to evaluate the care they’ve received upon arrival and after each visit; upon arrival, also ask about their health status and risks.

EQUIP YOUR PATIENTS



- Provide printed materials or easy-to-navigate online information on health conditions. Include explanations, advice, support resources, and links to external sites (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, etc.).
- Make it easy to access helpful information about your practice online. Include services offered, specialties, hours of operation, and what to do in an emergency.
- Give patients real-time online access to their medical records, including diagnoses, test results, an explanation of what they mean, and next steps.
- Implement a reminder system for appointments, immunizations, and preventive services. Also, offer interactive tools such as the ability to schedule appointments online.

PROVIDE EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE



- Communicate your service standards to your staff.
- Use a live answering service so patients can connect with someone when the office is closed.
- Add patients to a wait list if they are unable to schedule an appointment when they need it.
- Try to schedule well visits/routine physicals within 4 weeks and non-urgent sick visits within 48 to 72 hours of request.
- Notify patients if you are running behind (aim for 15 minutes or less wait time).
- Do not keep patients on hold for more than 30 seconds.