



Appendix 4.2

*Effective
Communication
Needs
Assessment*

Instructions:

- This assessment can be completed by anyone at any point in implementing effective communication. Questions that are not applicable can be skipped.
- Please note that Needs Assessments are long processes that require input and commitments from multiple partners within the organization and community to develop a robust and sustainable plan.

Current State of Accessibility

This section will help you capture a snapshot of the current landscape of effective communication at your organization or clinic. These questions will work to identify existing resources, existing opportunities, and describe the current processes.

Background

1. What is the motivation driving the development of systems and processes for implementing effective communication?
 - a. Are there specific populations you are focused on (e.g., people with visual disabilities, hearing disabilities, or intellectual or developmental disabilities)?
 - b. Are there certain settings you are focused on (e.g., scheduling, radiology appointments, etc.)
 - c. Are there specific modalities of communication you are focused on (e.g., written, verbal, and/or electronic)?
2. What is the specific goal or desired outcome of implementing effective communication?
3. How does implementing effective communication align with any current organizational priorities (e.g., quality and safety; health equity; language interpretation)?
4. What, if any, leadership support is there for implementing effective communication?
5. What, if any, regulatory requirements are there for implementing effective communication (e.g., Joint Commission Certificates, U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid requirements, state-level requirements, etc.)?

Policy and Procedures

1. What, if any, effective communication policies does your organization have?

2. Does your policy apply organization-wide or within certain clinics or units? If it is within specific clinics or units, list them.
3. What types of disability experiences do effective communication policies support?
4. How do you evaluate compliance with the policy?

Processes

1. What is the process for patients to request a preferred communication strategy or auxiliary aid or service? What is the process for caregivers with disabilities?
2. At what point(s) of care are communication-related needs questions asked of patients? Select all that apply.
 - During scheduling/registration
 - Electronic check-in
 - In-person check-in
 - Exam room
 - Patient portal
 - Other: _____
3. What aids and services are listed in your electronic health record as options for patients?
 - Are these fields required, optional, or free-text?
4. What question(s), if any, about preferred communication strategies are systematically asked to patients?

Communication Auxiliary Aids and Services (Accommodations)

1. What communication auxiliary aids and services are currently available? See Appendix 4.5 for a list of examples.
2. In which clinics or units are these auxiliary aids and services available?

3. How are staff made aware of where auxiliary aids and services are located and how to access them at the point of care?
 - a. INPATIENT ONLY: How will staff access auxiliary aids and services after hours?
4. What types of disabilities do your auxiliary aids and services support?
5. Are there any specific individuals, groups, or departments within your organization who are excelling at providing auxiliary aids and services?
6. Are existing aids and services available to caregivers with disabilities?
7. Is there a budget to implement effective communication across written/digital, verbal, and non-verbal communication modalities?
 - a. What types of budgets exist?
 - b. Whose budget is used for staff training vs. auxiliary aids and services?
 - c. What types of initiatives or supplies are covered by that budget?
8. Is there a list of auxiliary aids and services available across the healthcare system?
 - a. Is this posted internally?
 - b. Is this posted externally so patients can view the list?
 - c. Who maintains the list, and when has it last been updated?
 - d. How are available communication accommodations tracked in the organization?

People

1. Who oversees how effective communication policies and procedures are implemented?
 - a. How might this differ by clinic/department?
 - b. How might this differ by communication strategies and services?

2. Who oversees how aids and communication equipment are prioritized/purchased?
 - a. How might this differ by clinic/department?
 - b. How might this differ by type of accommodation?

3. Who might be your champions? They could include:
 - a. Disability Coordinator (i.e., “ADA Coordinator”, “Section 504 Officer”, “Section 1557 Coordinator”, “Disability Accessibility Coordinator”.)
 - b. Clinicians
 - c. Practice managers
 - d. Interpreter services
 - e. Other: _____

4. Who in your organization might have expertise in effective communication and/or auxiliary aids and services?
 - a. Interpreter services
 - b. Rehabilitation departments
 - c. Speech-language pathologists
 - d. Audiologists
 - e. Other: _____

Training

1. What effective communication training do you currently provide to staff and clinicians?
 - Policy procedures
 - Communication strategies
 - Providing/using auxiliary aids and services
 - Other: _____

2. How do you provide training?
 - Online modules
 - Simulations
 - Seminars/webinars
 - Other: _____

3. Is there someone responsible for creating, updating, or facilitating training for staff and providers on effective communication policies?

Institutional Support

1. What initiatives exist for communicating effectively with all patients, potentially including patients with disabilities?

Identify Gaps and Strengths

This section will help you to identify gaps and opportunities for future initiatives.

Based on the above information, describe your organization's:

1. **Strengths**: What internal factors exist that could facilitate providing effective communication in your organization?

2. **Weaknesses**: What internal barriers exist that inhibit providing effective communication at your organization?

3. **Opportunities**: What favorable external factors exist that could promote providing effective communication at your organization?

4. **Threats**: What external factors exist that have the potential to inhibit the success of providing effective communication at your organization?

Materials and Resources

- Appendix 0.9: Disability Accommodations Inventory Table
- Appendix 4.1: Effective Communication Implementation Team
- Appendix 4.5: Effective Communication Accommodations Examples
- Appendix 4.12: Effective Communication Barriers & Strategies

Appendix 0.9 can be accessed in the General Resources chapter.