

Ten-minute Tools

Tools to inspire a service culture through insight, discussion and action



Service Recovery with A-HEART: Apologize, Hear and Empathize...

INSIGHT

Providing our patients and members with the best service possible is a top priority for Kaiser Permanente. It is important to acknowledge that lapses in service do happen, and even with the best of intentions, sometimes things don't go as planned. Service Recovery with A-HEART helps to re-establish a trusting relationship with patients and members. The first three steps are focused on expressing regret for the negative experience and ensuring that patients and members feel heard and cared for by Kaiser Permanente.

Apologize: A sincere apology for not having met a patient/member's service expectations can help calm them and open them up to a resolution. Some things to keep in mind:

- Check your reaction.
- Start with the phrase "I'm sorry..."
- Apologize for the experience.
- Don't blame anyone.

Hear: The best approach we can take when a patient or member has a problem or concern is to listen and not interrupt. Even if we think we know where the patient or member is headed, it's important to let them vent their feelings and get the complete story out.

Empathize: Noticing and responding to the fact that someone is worried, upset or disappointed can help them feel that you care. Use words and phrases that demonstrate caring and understanding, such as *"I can see that would be very stressful..."*.

DISCUSSION

How do you and your team typically respond to unhappy patients and members? How can you begin to integrate the first three steps of Service Recovery with A-HEART?

ACTION

Practice Service Recovery with A-HEART when a patient or member expresses dissatisfaction. See if you notice a difference.



This document supports Building Trust and Confidence, an evidence-based communication practice that helps to reduce patient and member anxiety, resulting in improved patient care, health outcomes, referrals/hand-offs, and patient and staff satisfaction.

For tools, training and resources on this and other evidence-based practices that help to improve the patient and member experience, please visit the National Service Quality website at: <http://kpnet.kp.org/qrrm/service2/index.html>.

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Service Recovery with A-HEART: ...**A**sk, **R**esolve and **T**hank

INSIGHT

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Ask: To begin solving the problem, apologize again and ask *"What can I do to make this better for you?"* Be sure to pause and let the person respond. Most people will ask for reasonable solutions.

Resolve: Use their requested solution if possible. You also can provide additional options. This can be very powerful, because it demonstrates your willingness to find a solution, focuses on solving the problem, and gives them some control through choosing.

Thank: Complaining is usually very uncomfortable for people, but their concern is very important to us. We need to know when our service fails to meet expectations so we can improve. Thank patients and members for the effort it took to express their concern and let them know their efforts will allow you to improve the experience for them and others. Consider the following example:

"Thank you for bringing this situation to our attention. It will help us do a better job in the future."

DISCUSSION

How do you and your team typically respond to unhappy patients and members? How can you begin to integrate the final three steps of Service Recovery with A-HEART?

ACTION

Practice Service Recovery with A-HEART when a patient or member expresses dissatisfaction. See if you notice a difference.



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