# A PATIENT APPROACH

## A CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING A BETTER PATIENT EXPERIENCE

### THE BENEFITS OF BUILDING A BETTER PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Patients today are more empowered to make choices about where they want to go for care. People that are unhappy with their healthcare provider are likely to do two things: 1) tell others about their dissatisfaction and 2) choose to go elsewhere for care. Both are damaging to providers.

The good news is that there are steps healthcare providers can take to improve the patient experience. Follow the steps in this checklist to begin designing better experiences for your patients.

### 1 DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN PATIENT EXPERIENCE AND PATIENT SATISFACTION.

Patient satisfaction and patient experience are not the same thing, but the two are often confused. Learn the difference and be sure you're not ticking the patient experience box for patient satisfaction efforts.

The Beryl Institute offers a helpful definition of patient experience that states: Patient experience is the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization's culture, that influence patient perceptions across the continuum of care.

With this definition in mind it is easy to see that patient experience goes beyond whether a patient was satisfied with the greeting they received during their recent visit. Patient experience is about the overall perception and emotional connection patients feel. It is what creates loyalty and turns patients into ambassadors for your healthcare organization. Recognize the distinction and make sure your organization fully understands the different aspects of patient experience.
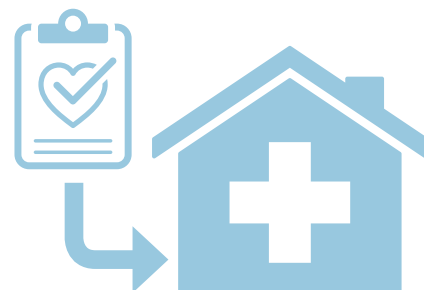
### 2 DEFINE HOW PATIENT EXPERIENCE TIES INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CLINICAL CARE.

Building on the previous point, to make sure that patient experience is not a vague concept, outline what it means to your organization. How will staff deliver positive experiences? What should patients expect from your organization? Describe the things you want to be known for providing so you have something to direct your efforts.

One of the industry's top patient experience performers is Sharp Healthcare. Sharp has adopted seven pillars of excellence that serve as the foundation for its patient experience work: quality, safety, service, people, finance, growth and community. Define the focus of your patient experience efforts to create a consistent set of guidelines.

**PATIENT EXPERIENCE IS ABOUT THE OVERALL PERCEPTION AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTION PATIENTS FEEL. IT IS WHAT CREATES LOYALTY AND TURNS PATIENTS INTO AMBASSADORS FOR YOUR HEALTHCARE ORGANIZATION.**

# A CHECKLIST FOR BUILDING A BETTER PATIENT EXPERIENCE
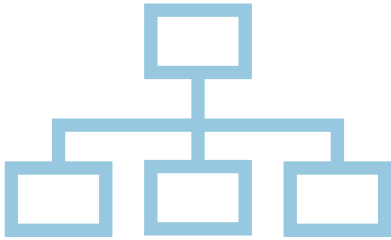
**3**

## SUPPORT AND DRIVE PATIENT EXPERIENCE EFFORTS FROM THE TOP DOWN.

Make patient experience improvement a priority by managing it from the top. If your organization is a large hospital or healthcare system, hire a dedicated Chief Experience Officer. Otherwise, assign a dedicated leader the responsibility of monitoring and driving patient experience efforts. This way you can be sure that patient experience is getting the attention it needs.

Employee buy-in is essential to creating memorable patient experiences. Think about Disney World and the experiences visitors have because employees buy into their roles as characters. Motivate your employees and encourage buy-in throughout your organization by proving the C-level is committed to building positive patient experiences.

**4**

## PERFORM A PATIENT EXPERIENCE OBSERVATION EXERCISE.

Learn about what is currently fueling your patients' experiences by performing a patient experience observation. Bring in an impartial outside party to assess different aspects of patient care and report on where adjustments are needed and where opportunities for improvement exist.

Often it is hard for those within an organization to remove all bias and see things from a patient's perspective. For example, a facility's signage may not be clear to patients visiting for the first time and might be causing undue stress and confusion for new patients. However, employees that see the signage on a regular basis don't recognize there is a problem. Outside observers can offer valuable insights and a different perspective on various aspects of care. Participate in a patient experience observation exercise and use the feedback you receive to make changes that lead to better patient experiences.

**5**

## EVALUATE HOW TECHNOLOGY IS IMPACTING YOUR ORGANIZATION'S PATIENT EXPERIENCE.

Technology can play a huge role in improving the patient experience. Look at your organization's use of Electronic Medical Records to see if you are using data to orchestrate meaningful and personal healthcare experiences.

Most hospitals and physicians use EMRs to track medical and demographic information. But few organizations take advantage of features like "notes" that store patient details beyond just medical and demographic information. Optimizing use of EMRs gives providers a way to collect personal patient details that are useful for facilitating positive patient experiences. For example, remembering and responding to the fact that a patient has been through a traumatic experience, lives alone, is shy, or has transportation issues could make all the difference in a patient's healthcare experience. If your organization is not taking full advantage of EMRs, make changes to better use technology.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** These steps will help you get started on the path to creating a better overall experience for your patients. By making a dedicated effort to deliver the best possible patient experience each and every time throughout the entire care continuum, you will build loyalty and keep patients returning to your organization.