

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration



Gelb Consulting, An Endeavor Management Company

950 Echo Lane
Suite 200
Houston, Texas 77024

P + 281.759.3600
F + 281.759.3607
www.endeavormgmt.com/healthcare

Gelb
An Endeavor Management Company

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Overview

Today's emergency departments face many challenges similar to those of other service lines – issues such as declining reimbursements, recruiting and retaining staff, and providing timely care when already operating at capacity. However, the ED also faces unique challenges related to managing an incredibly vast range of clinical needs and being required to collaborate with numerous other departments to ensure patients receive appropriate diagnostic and follow-up care.

In this white paper, we discuss a necessary yet often undervalued component of high performing emergency departments: Integrating the ED with ancillary and support services.

Inter-departmental Integration

Collaborating with Other Services

No Emergency Department functions completely on its own. For patients who need to be admitted, the ability to be admitted quickly and to the appropriate level of care is critical. For those who are discharged home, long-term positive health outcomes are often dependent on receiving an accurate diagnosis and appropriate follow-up care. Either way, it is critical for the ED to have a smooth working relationship with other hospital departments to ensure patients receive the care that they need.

Departments that the ED most commonly works with include:

- Admitting
- Lab
- Radiology
- Cardiology
- Med/Surg
- ICU
- Housekeeping
- Transport



Many bottlenecks can be traced to ineffective communication and poor working relationships between the ED and other departments. Promoting respectful and mutually beneficial relationships cross-departmentally should be a priority for the ED leadership. This includes setting behavioral expectations for staff and providers in how to work with other departments respectfully.

It is also important to collaboratively agree on expectations and standards. A useful framework for this is a **Service Level Agreement**. A Service Level Agreement that is signed by both service areas will clarify expectations and promote process efficiency. Not only does this promote shorter turnaround

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration

times, it also allows ED staff to better set realistic expectations with patients (in which it is best to under-promise and over-deliver).

There are 3 steps to effectively utilizing a Service Level Agreement:



1. Develop the agreement by first forming an Action Team made up of cross-functional roles, including management and front-line staff from both the ED and the other department, such as lab. Then, jointly develop mutually agreed upon performance expectations in a written document that is signed by both areas. Allowing teams to come to a mutual agreement of expectations will improve effectiveness and internal buy-in.
2. Agree upon an implementation plan with a timeline. Assign responsibility by defining who will do what by when, and how it will get done.
3. Monitor performance against these standards and report results on a monthly (or at least quarterly) basis back to the Action Team.

Here are examples of performance expectations that might be included in a Service Level Agreement between the ED and lab:

1. **Blood drawing responsibilities**
 - All patients getting IVs will have blood drawn by ED Nurses within 5 minutes of reaching their assigned ED room. All others are drawn by Phlebotomist.
 - Phlebotomist will respond within 6 minutes of call by ED
2. **Test specific turnaround times**

▪ CBC, PT/PTT, U/A and CMP	30 minutes
▪ PT/PTT w D-Dimer and CMP	45 minutes
▪ Blood Bank	60 minutes
3. **Procedure for flagging results**
 - All lab results are immediately sent to the Physician's portal and flagged as ready on the ED tracking board

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Other expectations may focus on how the ED can most appropriately use ancillary services. For example:

- **Lab** - Order all possible tests needed with initial order. Many patients endure needless delays due to follow up lab tests ordered that could have been part of the initial order. The cost of running an additional test that may not be needed is much smaller than the cost of re-sticking a patient and waiting for a second round of lab tests to return.
- **CT** - All CTs should be based on solid medical justification and not legal concerns or weak diagnostic skills. The percentage of ED patients receiving a CT continues to climb even though the overall acuity of ED patients has decreased. Contrast should only be ordered when really necessary. If clinical results can be obtained without contrast, this avoids the complications associated with contrast and dramatically increases patient throughput.

Monitoring the performance of ancillary and support departments with internal surveys will allow the ED to track performance, identify trends, and monitor improvement. We recommend developing in-house surveys that can be filled out by staff of the various departments.

Surveys should be modeled after ED-CAHPS surveys, covering:

- Responsiveness
- Communication (Telephone Etiquette)
- Service Quality
- Courtesy and Attitude
- Overall Rating



Taking Action – Fostering a Culture of Collaboration

Tools such as a Service Level Agreement are a foundational step for the ED to collaborate with other departments, as it provides an opportunity to proactively agree on expectations and measure on-going success. However, any initiative such as this will be ineffective if it is not prioritized and regularly used. A culture that promotes inter-departmental collaboration takes proactive setting of clear expectations and an environment of mutual respect. Keep in mind that sustaining culture takes consistent effort over a period of time. In fact, it generally takes about three years to make a sustainable cultural change. It involves hiring and promoting the right people – those who adhere to the expectations – and hardwiring behavior with best practices. Both ED leadership and frontline staff should be empowered and accountable to ensuring that standards are being met and a culture of respect and collaboration is fostered.

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration

Here are tools that can help with tracking and understanding your ED's performance and identifying opportunities for improvement.

- Take our complimentary SMART assessment for Emergency Departments. It only takes 10 minutes and does not require additional information gathering. You will receive a PDF showing where you stand relative to benchmarks and best practices. [Take the survey here.](#)
- Emergency Department Experience Mapping – A research technique that elicits an understanding of the patient's experience, including their emotional and functional needs, at each step of the journey. [Read more here.](#)
- Dashboards – Bring together disparate sources of data with dashboard technology that allows you to track and monitor your progress in real time. [Read more here.](#)
- Read about our process, tools and other resources. [Click here.](#)

High Performing Emergency Departments

Interdepartmental Collaboration

About Gelb Consulting

Healthcare market leaders and challengers turn to Gelb Consulting to advance their strategic objectives. We work collaboratively with our clients to merge market insights and industry expertise to design and implement practical strategies. Our clients keep coming back to us not only for a near-term game plan, but as a long-term trusted partner.

Understanding the *What* and the *Why*

Our approach yields direction for our clients to drive advocacy – customers willing to go out of their way to recommend you. This is formed by the alignment of your brand’s promise, your delivery of services and how they are delivered. These create the ideal experience.

We believe that market leadership is based on a keen understanding of the underlying drivers of your customers – whether they be patients, families, referring physicians, donors or employees. Since our founding in 1965, we have continued to innovate identifying industry-leading best practices and deploying the latest research techniques to support our clients’ success.



Making the *How* a Reality

This is where our experience comes in. Our clients include many of the most recognized and well-regarded healthcare organizations in the country, with a focus the most complex - academic medical centers. We bring best practices and success to the table.

In addition, our seasoned consultants have been in your shoes, having decades of experience serving in leadership positions within healthcare organizations. We understand the challenges of navigating the most challenging of situations – from competitive environments to resource constraints. We work with you to implement practical strategies to accelerate business performance at a pace that’s manageable for your organization.

Contact Us:

800-846-4051

info@endeavormgmt.com

www.endeavormgmt.com/healthcare

To learn more :

www.endeavormgmt.com/healthcare