

Top 10 Ways that behavioral health staff can positively influence team huddles in primary care

From: Leslie C Book, MA, LCSW, Director of Behavioral Health, Esperanza Health Center, Philadelphia, PA

1. Remember not to dominate or take much time
2. Alert the team to patients who need follow up with behavioral health
3. Comment briefly on psychosocial history that complicates their medical conditions
4. Comment briefly on the patient strengths, improvements made
5. Remind the team the effects of trauma (present and past) on the patient
6. Check the patient's medication list. If "unknown psych meds" is there, let the team know you will see patient to ascertain psychotropic medications.

From: Marsha Johnson, LCSW, Clinical Therapist, The Urban Health Institute, Cooper University Hospital, Camden, NJ

7. Behavioral health staff often holds patient history over time. As providers come and go, and patients change providers, during the huddle, behavioral health staff can assist new providers in giving them a "heads-up" or brief synopsis of patients they are inheriting from other provider. For example: "Mr. J. has struggled with depression on and off for the last 10 years. The last time I saw him he seemed to be quite stable. Let me know if you want me to consult."
8. Behavioral health staff can help build provider empathy towards their patients if they have information about behavioral health that might be interfering with the patient-provider relationship and established care plans. For example: "Ms. R. has a pretty extensive trauma history so she might be avoiding getting her PAP. If you want me to talk with her maybe we can focus on building some skills that might help her to get to this appointment."

9. When behavioral health staff has developed a strong working relationship with a provider, they can assist in identifying and reducing the burnout that can occur when patients that are not responsive to aspects of their care/treatment plan. For example: "Dr. S., I can tell that caring for Mr. T. is frustrating. Do you think it would help to step back and use some Motivational Interviewing strategies"?

From: Travis Cos, Ph.D., Behavioral Health Consultant- Philadelphia Health Management Corporation Care Clinic, Philadelphia, PA

10. I will mention a specific health pathway I am focusing on, diabetes, for example, and I may combine a behavioral health fact - "depression is highly prevalent in diabetes" - with an offer to help "I can be helpful in managing depression and addressing adherence needs"
11. Even talking about population penetration goals, can be useful; for example, "in the last 3 months, I've seen 12% of total clinic patients. I'd like to build on this by widening the range of people I see. Is there any condition or concern you feel I can best help out with, from what you've been seeing in your practice"?
12. Pragmatically, I also just ask questions like "Looking over today's roster, Is there anyone that you think I may be of help with"?

From: Frank Johnson, MSW, MPH, Behavioral Health Consultant, Greater Philadelphia Health Action, 1401 S. 4th St., Philadelphia, PA 19147

13. "If you anticipate any difficulties with your patients, I'm here to help you."
14. I'll also say to a provider who I know is overwhelmed... "Let me know what I can do to make your day less stressful."