

Innovative Staffing Models to Support COVID Recovery

Implementing innovative staffing models will be key for your practice's COVID-19 recovery plan. Innovative staffing models help to ensure the safety of your office staff, offer flexible options for your staff in the time of a pandemic, help to identify core functions that can be done in the office versus remotely, and help you to prepare in the event of staff shortages due to staff or family member illness. Innovative staffing models include implementing schedules to minimize the number of people physically in the practice at a given time by staggering hours and staff and combining telemedicine with in-person visits. The following menu of recommendations and resources are available to help you get started with creating a new staffing model for your practice:

- Consider your staffing needs for multiple scenarios including:
 - o Re-opening:
 - Phasing in of services offered
 - Limited in-person visits and number of staff/patients in office
 - Supplemented by telemedicine
 - Extended office hours
 - o Surge:
 - Prepare for potential surges of patients with COVID and/or influenza
 - Significantly limit in-person visits and number of staff/patients in office
 - Increased care delivery by telemedicine
 - o Long-term needs:
 - More full-service offerings
 - Return to normal operating hours
- Establish mini-teams within your practice. A mini-team is comprised of the essential staff required to keep your office functioning.
 - o Determine essential functions and establish roles and responsibilities for each member of the mini-team.
 - o Identify members of your staff with core skills, roles, and responsibilities and assign them to a mini-team.
 - o Ensure each mini-team has the appropriate mix of clinical and office administration skills.
 - o Supplement in-person responsibilities with remote work. Consider assigning remote work responsibilities to staff members at increased risk from COVID infection (hypertension, heart disease, obesity, chronic lung disease, age>60).
- Develop a strategy to address potential staff shortages (due to illness, sick family members, school/childcare closings, quarantine)
 - o Cross-train staff on essential functions
 - o Establish a back-up staffing contingency plan
 - o Hold daily huddles with staff to see how they are doing and identify what support they might need. If possible, include remote staff in your daily huddles.
 - Resource: [JAMA article on addressing staff anxiety in the time of COVID](#)
- Develop a schedule to minimize the number of people who are physically present in the office
 - o Assign each mini-team to alternating days or staggered hours

Example Mini-Team Worksheet - *Instructions: Identify what type of services your practice will offer and identify the core staffing support (mini-team) needed to provide these services. Then assign members of your staff to each mini-team based on their roles and skillset.*

Mini-Team	Services Offered	Team Roles	In-person or Remote	Essential Responsibilities
Team A	Team A is the core team my practice needs to conduct patient care through a mixture of in-person and remote care.	Physician	☒ In-person ☐ Remote	☒ Chronic disease management ☒ Diagnosis ☒ Treatment ☒ Referral
		Clinical Team Member	☒ In-person ☐ Remote	☒ In-person screening protocols ☒ Standing orders for preventive care ☒ Patient counseling
		Clinical Team Member	☐ In-person ☒ Remote	☒ Tele-triage ☒ Follow-up patient communication ☒ Manage inbox/patient portal ☒ Order labs/tests ☒ Provide patient education ☒ Population management
		Office Staff	☐ In-person ☒ Remote	☒ Patient scheduling ☒ Appointment/text reminders ☒ Remote check-in ☒ Billing/coding and process invoices/payments ☒ Liaison to vendors
Team B	Team B is the core team my practice needs to conduct patient care through telemedicine only.	Physician	☐ In-person ☒ Remote	☒ Chronic disease management ☒ Diagnosis ☒ Treatment ☒ Referral
		Clinical Team Member	☐ In-person ☒ Remote	☒ Tele-triage ☒ Follow-up patient communication ☒ Manage inbox/patient portal ☒ Order labs/tests ☒ Provide patient education ☒ Population management
Team C	Team C is the core team my practice needs to conduct limited in-person care during extended hours.	Physician	☒ In-person ☐ Remote	☒ Chronic disease management ☒ Diagnosis ☒ Treatment ☒ Referral
		Office Staff	☐ In-person ☒ Remote	☒ Patient scheduling ☒ Appointment/text reminders ☒ Remote check-in

Example Schedule Worksheet (for small-to-mid-size practices)- *Instructions: Identify the type of services you will be offering during each day/time block and assign a mini-team to each day/time block as appropriate. Consider rotating the daily or weekly assignment of mini-teams to ensure minimal overlap between staff members. Assign back-up teams or staff to provide supplemental service in the event of staff shortages. This worksheet should be adapted to meet the size and staffing needs of your practice.*

Day	Time Block	Services Offered	Mini-Team Assignment(s)	Back-up Assignment(s)
Monday	AM – extended hours	☐ In-person and telemedicine (full service) ☐ In-person and telemedicine (limited service) ☐ Telemedicine only ☐ N/A (services not offered at this time)		
	AM – normal operating hours			
	PM – normal operating hours			
	PM – extended hours			
Tuesday	AM – extended hours			
	AM – normal operating hours			
	PM – normal operating hours			
	PM – extended hours			
Wednesday	AM – extended hours			
	AM – normal operating hours			
	PM – normal operating hours			
	PM – extended hours			
Thursday	AM – extended hours			
	AM – normal operating hours			
	PM – normal operating hours			
	PM – extended hours			
Friday	AM – extended hours			
	AM – normal operating hours			
	PM – normal operating hours			
	PM – extended hours			
Saturday	AM – weekend hours			
	PM – weekend hours			
Sunday	AM – weekend hours			
	PM – weekend hours			