

Quality Care

Definition

Quality care means offering excellent health services to all patients, including those who have disabilities. Quality care includes respectful communication, reasonable accommodations, and avoiding assumptions based on disability status alone.

Avoiding Pitfalls

Actions speak louder than words. To make patients feel welcome at your health care facility, you need more than just a WELCOME sign. Here are a few things that could make patients with disabilities feel unwanted:

- ▮ Inaccessible entrances (e.g., doors that aren't wheelchair-friendly)
- ▮ Sidewalks in disrepair, uneven pavement, or lack of curb cuts
- ▮ No service animals allowed
- ▮ A lack of interpreters (e.g., for American Sign Language)
- ▮ Staff that aren't willing to learn about how disabilities affect their patients
- ▮ Administration that is unwilling to agree to reasonable accommodations for their patients and employees

Impact on Patient Care

When patients are listened to, respected, and treated as individuals, their experience in your health care facility will go more smoothly. This will be reflected in how they talk to others about your facility. It will also make it more likely that they will come in for preventative care appointments such as routine physicals. Ensuring that all patients feel welcome at your hospital will create an atmosphere of caring and compassion.

Tips for High-Quality Care

- ▮ **Ask patients what works best for them**, rather than making assumptions.
- ▮ **Take the time** to listen, make eye contact, and ask lots of questions.
- ▮ **Ask patients with difficult speech to repeat themselves**, and repeat what you understood them to say. Don't guess at their meaning or finish their sentences.
- ▮ **Use language that puts the person first**, not their disability. For example, "a 20-year-old man with autism" is preferable to "a 20-year-old autistic man."
- ▮ If a patient is insulted or annoyed by something you've said or done, **acknowledge the issue, apologize for the misunderstanding, and move on.**
- ▮ **Plan ahead to accommodate patients' needs.** Investing this time up front will minimize hassles later.

Resources

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

<http://1.usa.gov/XmKgmU>

CheckPoint: What is Quality in Health Care?

<http://bit.ly/UDxnlk>

New York State Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

<http://cqc.ny.gov/>

Job Accommodation Network

<http://www.askjan.org/index.html>



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Inclusive Health Care was developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Boston Children's Hospital. We have decades of experience in workforce training and specialized consultation related to disability inclusion.

