



HOSPITAL CUSTOMER CARE POLICIES MANUAL

FINAL REPORT

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1.0 Overview

This document can be used by Jordanian hospitals to ensure that the principles of patient centered and customer care are utilized to plan and deliver health care services. This document is not intended to be prescriptive but rather to be used as a reference guide for health care providers to enhance overall commitment to deliver better quality health services and patient satisfaction . The experiences of patients/families of health care vary considerably. Some patients may have an occasional intervention while others have a more permanent and long-term relationship with a service provider depending on the nature and extent of their need. Therefore, it is important to involve patients and their families in the management of their care and treatment. Hospital customers are patients, families, employees, doctors, suppliers, trainees and students. This document sheds light on principles of customer satisfaction in a hospital setting, and outlines efficient customer satisfaction policy. The document also addresses tips and advice to effectively handle customer complaints. As well, since all hospital staff should assume some degree of responsibility to customer satisfaction, this document highlights the roles and competencies needed for various staff levels at the hospital.

2.0 Introduction to Patient Satisfaction

Patient satisfaction in private hospitals reflects the image that the hospital is willing to promote about itself to potential customers. It is well-known that medical care referrals are usually made by previous or recurring customers, and such referrals are largely dependent on the level of these customers' satisfaction. Therefore, aspiring hospitals that are looking to attract increasing numbers of customers should pay special attention to their levels of customer satisfaction and subsequently work on improving them.

2.1 Definition of Patient Satisfaction

Satisfaction is not a fixed pre-existing status; it is a dynamic judgment over a period of time about how the patient/ family feel about care provided and to which extent their needs are met considering their expectations and past experience. Patient satisfaction is an expression of the gap between the expected and perceived characteristics of a service. Satisfaction is a subjective phenomenon and could be elicited by asking simply how satisfied or not patients may be about the services provided to them by hospitals.

2.2 Importance of patients/families feedback

Hospitals should give utmost attention and consideration to the feedback it receives from patients and/or their families, since such feedback assumedly:

- Can influence the quality improvement efforts.
- Should be recognized as a legitimate method of evaluating health services.
- Must continually capture, measure and evaluate patient satisfaction through a range of agreed mechanisms.
- Should be analyzed and inform the service planning process.
- Should be viewed as an opportunity for organizational learning and development.
- Should provide crucial information on the patients/clients expectations.
- Increases opportunities for shared decision making with patient/families.
- Gives care providers new insights into how people perceive care.
- Increases consumer confidence in the hospital.

2.3 Factors Affecting Patient/Family Satisfaction

While collective patient/family satisfaction can be a good indicator about how well the hospital is doing, there are several factors that could affect each evaluators satisfaction. These factors include:

- Patient/family expectations
- Patient age

- Nature and severity of illness
- Previous experience
- Choices for health care facilities
- Evaluator's gender
- Culture and socioeconomic status
- Educational level and occupation.

2.4 Patient /Family Rights and Responsibilities:

As a step towards setting expectations between the hospital and its patients and their families, the hospital must state and publish clearly the patient /family rights and responsibilities. The hospital should establish a process to ensure that all patients/families understand their rights and responsibilities. Below is an example of patient/ family rights and responsibilities:

2.4.1 Patient / Family Rights

- Respect, dignity, regardless of nationality, color, age, religion, origin, gender, and disability.
- Maintain privacy in all clinical interviews, examinations, procedures/treatments, and transport.
- Receive optimal care when in a terminal state.
- Be addressed by name, and not by any other identification.
- Receive adequate assessment and relief for pain.
- Have their possessions looked after while in hospital.
- Know the financial cost of their treatment.
- Request a change of physician, other health care providers and hospital.
- Receive medical care in a convenient atmosphere of safety and cleanliness.
- Expect physical safety.
- Know the reason for any test or procedure to be carried out.
- Know the nature and risks of any procedure to which they have given consent.
- Know by name the physician and staff members involved in their treatment.

- Obtain detailed and accurate medical report.
- Refuse signing the consent form if not fully informed.
- Refuse to participate in medical training programs and research projects.
- Expect that all records pertaining to their care, are kept confidential.
- Receive timely responses about lodging complaints.

2.4.2 Patient / Family Responsibilities

Patients who chose a hospital over another should be respectful of the hospital's rules and regulations for ensuring their own safety and well-being. In specific, they should:

- Be considerate of the rights of the other patients.
- Notify their physician of the full details of their medical problems.
- Follow care recommendations given to them by their health provider professionals.
- Commit to medical appointments, and communicate any cancellations.
- Avoid bringing their children with them when visiting.
- Avoid leaving hospital before their discharge procedures are completed.
- Notify the physician about inability to continue therapy.
- Hold responsibility for the consequences of refusing treatment.
- Refrain from using their mobile telephones in prohibited areas.
- Be courteous to hospital personnel.
- Maintain hospital properties, inside or outside their rooms, from destruction.
- Refrain from smoking in all hospital facilities.

3.0 Handling Customer Complaints

Hospitals should establish a process to obtain feedback about how their customers feel about health care provided to them as well as to which extent their needs are met considering their expectations. One of the common strategies is to develop a policy for customer satisfaction utilizing surveys.

3.1 Recommendations for Hospital Complaining/Suggestion Policy

It is recommended that the hospital's complaining/suggestion policy or procedure addresses the following:

1. Acknowledge the patient/family right to complain
2. Ensure that the complaint is assessed upon receipt, so that any concerns about a risk to the safe care of other patients can be identified promptly.
3. Clarify what the person's concerns are and manage expectations about possible outcomes to the investigation of the complaint.
4. Consider the various options for resolving the complaint
5. Ensure that the person is kept informed of progress throughout the life of the complaint.
6. Confirm to the person what support is available to assist in making a complaint
7. Take statements from, and interview if necessary, those staff involved in the events leading up to the complaint.
8. Where necessary, obtain clinical advice on the matters raised.
9. Ensure that any letters to the person making the complaint are written in plain English and are as free as possible of clinical or other technical terminology.
10. Offer an apology if appropriate.
11. Ensure that general learning is taken from specific complaints and is embedded into the system of care for the future.

Following is an example of customer care policy.

3.2 Customer Complaints Policy

3.2.1 Purposes of the Policy

This policy was designed to serve the following purposes:

- Monitor the patient and employee needs, expectations and level of satisfaction.
- Identify gaps and opportunities to improve patients and employees satisfaction.
- Assess department`s ability to meet the students and trainees needs, expectations and satisfaction.
- Monitor the expectations of the suppliers and explore the hospital's opportunities in its suppliers relationships.

3.2.2 Guidelines for Improved Handling of Customer Complaints

- A. Hospital is committed to providing a comprehensive patient care service that meets and exceeds patients' expectations.
- B. Hospital policy is to track inpatients and outpatients needs and satisfaction through regular surveys.
- C. Quality improvement / public relation division is responsible for conducting patient satisfaction surveys and preparing reports and monitors the interventions and actions to improve patient satisfaction.
- D. Quality improvement / public relation division is responsible for conducting employees' satisfaction surveys and preparing reports and monitors the interventions and actions to improve employees' satisfaction.
- E. Hospital departments are committed to conduct student / trainee satisfaction studies and report the results to Quality improvement division.
- F. The supply department conducts the supplier satisfaction study and reports the results to quality improvement division.

3.2.3 Patient Satisfaction:

3.2.3.1 Inpatient Satisfaction Survey

- A. Satisfaction data collection tool is distributed to a representative sample of patients who stayed Over 24 hours.
- B. The data collection team staff will explain to the patient the importance of having their opinion and filling out the satisfaction form.
- C. The Quality improvement / public relation division staff collects the forms and analyzes data on a monthly basis.
It is advisable to hire an independent agency to do the surveys
- D. A response rate of 40% or more is considered satisfactory for the purpose of analysis
- E. Analysis reports are prepared and communicated to all departments on a monthly basis.
- F. Departments are expected to take action based on the results.
- G. Actions taken to rectify any discrepancies or improve the process should be communicated to the Quality Improvement Division.

3.2.3.2 Outpatient Satisfaction Survey

- A. The Quality improvement / public relation division or independent agency conducts monthly outpatient satisfaction survey.
- B. Appropriate representative sample size is selected by Quality Improvement / public relation division.
- C. The methods utilized in surveys include qualitative and quantitative analysis.
- D. Survey results are studied and analyzed by the Quality Improvement / public relation division.
- E. A report of results analysis is issued and communicated to all departments.
- F. Departments are expected to take action based on the results.
- G. Actions taken to rectify any discrepancies or improve the process should be communicated to the Quality Improvement / public relation division.

3.2.3.3 Employee Satisfaction:

- A. Quality Improvement / public relation division conducts semi-annual employee satisfaction survey.
- B. All hospital employees are included in the survey. The Quality Improvement / public relation division sends the survey questionnaires to all departments in formal letters.
- C. Hospital departments' directors are responsible to collect the filled questionnaires from their employees and send them back to Quality Improvement division.
- D. A report of results analysis is issued and communicated to all departments.
- E. Departments are expected to take action based on the results.
- F. Actions taken to rectify any discrepancies or improve the process should be communicated to the Quality Improvement / public relation division.

3.2.3.4 Students and Trainees Satisfaction:

- A. Every department director is responsible to gather information about the students and trainees who train in their departments.
- B. This study is performed every semester.
- C. All students and trainees are included in this study.
- D. Departments analyze the information related to students and trainees satisfaction.
- E. The results of this study are reported to Quality Improvement / public relation division every semester.

3.2.3.5 Suppliers Satisfaction:

- A. On every material or service reception, insurance companies, suppliers are sent a questionnaire by mail or fax and the supplier is expected to reply within 2 weeks.
- B. Head of supply department is expected to supervise the data collection.
- C. Data collection regarding suppliers' satisfaction is a continuous process.
- D. Data analysis is performed every 3 months and results are reported to Quality improvement / public relation division

3.3 Assessing the Hospital's Customer Complaint Process

In order to assess the efficiency of your hospital's complaining process, you can start with asking the following questions:

1. Is your organization good at letting people know you want to know what they think?
2. If you have a reception or waiting area, is there a poster that asks for people's views?
3. When someone first makes contact with your service, do you explain how they can offer feedback or complain?
4. Do you have a suggestions box with pens and forms for people to complete?
5. Do you regularly ask people who use your service about their experiences of the care you provide?
6. If anyone working in your service was asked about your complaints process, would they be able to explain the basic system and tell the service user where they could get more information and support?
7. Is the information you provide accessible to all the people who use your services? For example, if someone does not speak Arabic fluently, would they still be able to complain?
8. Is it clear to everyone working in your service, and the people who use it, what changes you have made in light of ideas or comments you have received?
9. Has your hospital ever run, or been part of, a campaign to get people to give their views?

10. Do you use other sources of information about people's experiences to help improve your service such as surveys and consultations?

3.4 Principles of Handling Patient /Family Complaints or Suggestions:

1. Getting it right: understanding root problems is key to smart and quick action that will remedy any customer dissatisfaction
2. Being customer focused: while it is tempting to defend oneself or fellow-hospital staff, the bottom line should always be the customer
3. Being open and accountable: hospital staff dealing with customer complaints should expect any types of complaints, and react accordingly. They should not restrict customers from expressing their dissatisfaction based on pre-judgments.
4. Acting fairly and proportionately: the level of reaction to any customer complaint should not jeopardize other patients' rights or internal hospital rules and regulations. It should always address the issue with tact and precision.
5. Putting things right: due to the various degrees of customer complaints, it is sometimes easy to mix things together. A person dealing with customer complaints should be able to sort things out and figure out the underlying elements of a complaint.
6. Seeking continuous improvement: the process of handling complaints should continually be revisited and improved. As well, customer care staff should be updated with best practices in order to keep a bright image about the hospital.

3.5 Steps for Dealing with Patient /Family Complaints

1. Publicize your complaints procedures: Encourage Patient/family to speak how they feel about Care and Services Utilizing Different Methods such as:
 - A. In person at reception points
 - B. By post using a Freepost address
 - C. Online and emails
 - D. By phone

2. Acknowledge a complaint when you receive it and offer to discuss the matter
3. Deal efficiently with complaints and investigate them properly and appropriately
4. Write to the patient/family who complained once the complaint has been dealt with, explaining how it has been resolved and what appropriate action has been taken, and reminding them that they can contact you if they are still unhappy
5. Assign someone senior in the hospital who is responsible for complaints or suggestions and learning from them
6. Help the person who is complaining to understand the complaints procedure
7. Aggregate and analyze data from complaints and check for trends
8. Produce periodic reports about complaints that have been received and outline what has been done to improve things as a result.

3.6 Handling on the Spot Complaints Efficiently

At times, hospital staff, regardless of their capacities, may be required to handle customer complaints on the spot. Following are some tips for efficient handling of such complaints:

1. Ask the person how they would like to be addressed – as Mr, Mrs, Ms or by their first name.
2. If someone has phoned you, offer to call them back and give them the chance to meet face to face to discuss the issue.
3. Ask them how they wish to be kept informed about how their complaint is being dealt with – by phone, letter, email or through a any other method.
 - If they say by phone, ask them for times when it is convenient to call and check that they are happy for messages to be left on their answer phone.
 - If they say by post, make sure that they are happy to receive correspondence at the address given.
4. Check if the person has any disabilities or circumstances you need to take account of (for example, do they require wheelchair access, or are they on medication that can make them drowsy?).
5. Offer to meet the person at a location convenient to them.
6. Make the person aware that they can request an advocate to support them throughout the complaints process, including at the first meeting.

7. Systematically go through the reasons for the complaint with the person who is unhappy – it is important that you understand why they are dissatisfied.
8. Ask them what they would like to happen as a result of the complaint (for example, an apology, new appointment, reimbursement for costs or loss of personal belongings or an explanation).
9. Agree a plan of action, including when and how the person complaining will hear back from the hospital.
10. If you think you can resolve the matter quickly without further investigation do so as long as the person complaining is happy with that and there is no risk to other service users.
11. For any complaint, remember to: check if consent is needed to access someone's personal records, and let the complainant know the name and contact details of the manager who will investigate their complaint.

4.0 Customer Service Staff

The hospital should have dedicated staff for continually assessing customer satisfaction rates. However, it is important to understand the role that each staff level members have in creating a customer-focused culture. Following are recommended behaviors for each staff level at the hospital, in order to ensure that the customer complaints are addressed at all levels.

4.1 The Hospital Leadership Role in Complaint Handling

1. Ensure that all staff are aware of the compliant policies or procedures
2. Make sure that all staff receives training on customer care.
3. Provide leadership and face-to-face support for customer services and complaints staff.
4. Ensure that what complaint office staff report is acted on and use the information to continually improve services.
5. Have defined process for people wishing to complain.

4.2 Competencies for Managers who deal and Handle Patient/Family Complaints

1. Excellent communication skills
2. Good understanding of the hospital complaints policy or procedure and patient/family rights
3. Different ways to resolve complaints and concerns
4. Problem-solving and negotiating skills
5. Mediation and counseling experience
6. Work effectively with internal and external stakeholders
7. Understand different cultural and special needs of customers
8. Knowledge of Jordanian laws and regulations
9. Understand policies of data protection, health and safety and human rights legislation.

4.3 Recommendations for Department Directors

1. Provide leadership for colleagues.
2. Remember that most people simply want an explanation, an apology and assurance that it won't happen again, to them or to anyone else.
3. Ensure that you and your teams are flexible about how you communicate with people throughout the complaints process
4. Ensure that your teams understand the complaints process
5. Following a complaint, ensure that you and your teams make the necessary improvements, to show that lessons are learnt, and prevent the problem occurring again for other patients.

4.4 Recommendations for Supervisor of Frontline Employee Role in

1. Make yourself available and approachable to people wishing to complain.
2. Communicate and investigate. Find out what went wrong and why, offer an apology and be prepared to acknowledge what went wrong and what shouldn't have happened

3. Offer a full explanation and, if appropriate, a solution or redress. Give assurance that you have taken the information on board, and will ensure that it won't happen again.
4. Ensure that your complaints manager has all the information and support they need to resolve issues satisfactorily.
5. Ensure that any staff you are responsible for are fully aware of the new approach and what it means in terms of being open, receptive, empathetic and responsive.

4.5 Recommendations for Frontline Care or Service Provider

1. Answer the phone or greet people as quickly as possible.
2. Introduce yourself, so people know who they're talking to.
3. Take their name and contact details.
4. Listen to what is being said – try not to interrupt.
5. Ask clarifying questions to ensure that you understand the issue.
6. Act on what the person tells you and offer a solution if you can.
7. If you can't help, find someone who can.
8. If necessary, take the details and get back to the person promptly.

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