TIME MANAGEMENT FOR HOSPICE CLINICIANS
BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

This Best Practice Guide provides recommendations for managing your time and tasks effectively:

Documentation is critical and time consuming. You begin a new day trying to finish up yesterday's list of "to do" items. Personally and professionally you have so much to do and so many priorities. How do you turn disappointing days into time management successes? Where do you begin?

Hospice care can seem like an unstructured environment where patient and caregiver needs fluctuate and unexpected issues arise. You can only begin to manage time more effectively after you understand where and with whom your time is being spent. Identifying time-wasting distractions and determining what amount of time is spent on non-productive tasks is an important first step.

First, decide in advance that 80% of your day will be devoted to patients and 20% will be preparation and travel. Setting your goal in advance will help you be more successful.

Get Organized:

- Set aside 15 minutes every day to plan and prioritize
- Establish a place for everything and put everything in its place
- Consolidate your commitments by putting all commitments in one calendar rather than floating between multiple calendars
- Separate the “need to do” tasks from the “nice to do” tasks
  - Plan to do the “need to do” tasks early
  - The “nice to do” tasks can be done later or even moved to another day
- Determine the average time it takes to complete regular tasks in your day (i.e. travel time, prep time, routine visit, documentation, IDG, etc.) and schedule time accordingly
- Keep a quick Reference List of frequently called numbers (Program Office, Physicians, Community Resources, Fax numbers, etc), so you don’t spend time tracking them down
- Schedule time in your day for phone calls, breaks and meals

Minimize Office Time:

- Whenever practical, end your day in the office
- Keep the office staff aware of your availability and any changes that may occur which could require assistance
- Respond to requests once: read it, respond to it, and be done with it
- Schedule additional visits to the office in coordination with meetings and inservices
- Make a list of all you need to accomplish in the office to ensure everything gets done:
  - Pick up specific supplies
  - Contact physicians regarding patient conditions and requests for orders
  - Notify MCP of any patient issues or concerns
  - Check your mailbox and bulletin boards for the latest announcements
Visits:

- Schedule planned expected visits early in the week with the more difficult visits occurring earlier in the day, when at all possible, as your time and energy will be more available
  - Save time later in the week for unanticipated / unscheduled follow-up visits or new admissions
- Prepare for visits the day before
  - Fill supplies
  - Call patients to confirm visits
- Group patients by geographic area whenever possible
- Plan your route and if appropriate, go to your first patient right from your home
  - Stopping by the office unnecessarily may cause distractions or delays
- Let your patients know about any unexpected delays before your designated arrived time
  - This will save a chain of calls between the patient, the office and you
- Provide approximate arrival times to patients seen on a frequent basis
  - This eliminates daily calls and patients know when to expect you
  - If you provide specific arrival times; your patients will expect you to be there prior to that time and will consider you late if you are not there on time
- Schedule time between visits for travel, phone calls and finalization of documentation
- Block time for visit prep (i.e. obtaining appropriate supplies), meetings, phone calls, learning (i.e. reviewing new job aids etc)
- Restock your treatment bag and trunk supply weekly
  - Be mindful of expiration dates and extreme temperatures
  - Keep track of supplies used and add them to a list of needs for when you are in the office
- Carry copies (paper or electronic) of frequently used Job Aids or other helpful information
- Nurses: Full Assessments to include skin assessments and wound measurements should be completed on the first visit of the week or whenever a change in condition has occurred
- Schedule lighter visits around IDG and Team meetings providing buffer time as to not be late
- Keep your electronic device plugged in while driving to assure it is fully charged for your next visit

Documentation:

- Best Practice suggests that documentation should be completed at the time care is provided
- Complete one thing before starting the next
- Set up a mobile office in your car complete with extra forms, office supplies and a writing board
- If your documentation takes more than 10-15 minutes ask your MCP or peers to suggest ideas to document more concisely
  - Refer to Job Aids such as:
    - Approved Abbreviations and Symbols Job Aid
    - Hospice Eligibility Documentation Tips and Strategies Job Aid
- Complete Itinerary as you travel throughout the day

Working with Physicians:

- Develop a list of Physician Contacts and helpful information
  - Best methods for communication
Phone and FAX numbers
Nurse / Office Manager Names
Best times to call
Business hours
Before providing details of a situation, assure you are speaking to the right person that can assist
Include all necessary information
Provide a call-back phone number at the beginning of the call
Before disclosing PHI, assure contact is on the Patient’s approved HIPAA list
Communicate efficiently and effectively using SBAR:
Situation
Background
Assessment
Recommendation
• Quickly organize the information in your mind using the four elements (Situation, Background, Assessment and Recommendation) in sequence
• Only the most relevant data is included, and everything irrelevant or of secondary importance is excluded
• Present the information
• Since team members can immediately recognize and understand the familiar, using a predictable SBAR format, you help them more efficiently and effectively address a situation or solve a problem
• The listener may confirm, clarify or enhance what you’ve said, then work with you to take the required action
Make a list of all the patients and issues that need to be addressed with the practitioner
• Avoid multiple calls to the same office
• Items may include but are not limited to:
  • significant change in patient condition
  • diagnostic results
  • changes to care or other important information
Notify the Site staff if you are waiting for a call back from a Physician’s office but will be unavailable so they can have the necessary information and are prepared for the call
Provide follow up with the Physician’s office
• Write Physician Orders
• Update the Hospice Plan of Care
• Notify the Clinical Manager as necessary

Professional Courtesy:
• If you are the first clinical associate in the patient's home, set up a clean, well organized space for medical supplies and patient teaching materials
• Write step-by-step instructions for complex medications, wound care and other treatment protocols for any after hour visits
• Assure your documentation is clear and concise with correct spelling and use of only approved abbreviations and symbols, so others do not misinterpret your documentation
Keys to Successful Time Management:

- **Focus** – Eliminate unnecessary tasks not related to your goals
- **Prioritize** – Schedule the most difficult activities when you are at your best
- **Solicit support from others** – Engage those around you in your efforts to improve your time management skills and assist you in your goals
- **Do what you least look forward to doing first** – Complete the “need to do” tasks first so your day will progress smoother as you look forward to what is ahead instead of dreading it
- **Know your capacity for stress** – When you begin to feel stressed or overwhelmed take a break
- **Maintain a positive and self motivating attitude** – Listen to your favorite music or bring along a book for break time
- **Take advantage of down time** – Use downtime to reenergize yourself or to review and reprioritize your schedule
- **Find enjoyment in your day and keep perspective** – Do not lose sight of the big picture, keep a sense of humor and remember what you do is important to others
- **Reevaluate challenging days and weeks** – First determine why they were challenging and ask yourself what you can have done differently considering the following:
  - What goals did I achieve?
  - What challenges did I encounter?
  - What decisions did I make and how did I go about making them?
  - Were there areas in which I spent a majority of my time not related to my goals?
  - Did I prioritize the “need to do” items over the “nice to do” items and schedule my day accordingly?
  - Did I reevaluate my priorities and refocus my time as a result?
  - Did I respectfully decline getting involved in issues not associated with my goals?
  - What specific “time wasters” kept interrupting my day?
  - When working on deliverables dependent on others:
    - Did I communicate clearly?
    - Did we establish mutually agreed upon timelines and expectations?
    - Did I follow-up in a timely manner?
    - Did I meet or exceed the deadline?

**SUMMARY**

Planning and organization increase the likelihood of you controlling events instead of events controlling you.

Good time management results in more time for your patients during the day and for yourself at the end of the day.