

Eight Steps to Service Recovery in Health Care

Anticipate needs

Understand and proactively meet patient expectations at key points along the experience pathway.

Example: "I know you've been waiting a long time; can I offer you some water while you wait?"

Acknowledge & apologize

Do not argue, blame others, make excuses, justify, quote policies, or explain at this time – simply listen and verbally and non-verbally communicate that you hear and understand the concern. This is not an admission of guilt. This is empathy – acknowledging a person's feelings and expressing regret for the inconvenience, the frustration, and the harm caused by the event.

Example: "I understand, and I am so sorry this happened to you. I can see why you would be frustrated."

Listen and ask open questions

Allow the person to tell their story without making assumptions or interrupting, then verbally summarize what you heard to confirm you understand what they shared. Next, ask open-ended questions to clarify the issue and help understand and respond to the person's emotional state.

Example: "If I understand you correctly, you are concerned that the rug in the entryway might cause someone to fall."

Take ownership and fix the problem quickly and fairly

This is the intentional move from the negative and into the positive action-focused mindset. Ask the person for their solution ideas. Carry out their ideas or offer alternative options to help the patient regain a sense of control.

Example: "How could we make this better for you today and for others in the future?"

Offer atonement

Right the wrong, sometimes an apology is enough, but ensure that the issue has been satisfactorily addressed. Let them know what you have or will do to correct the issue now and what you will do to ensure it never happens again.

Example: "Thank you for letting us know. Again, I'm so sorry this happened. I have notified your provider team, and I will also let our safety officer know so we can make sure nothing like this happens to you or anyone else in the future."

Thank them and follow up

After the incident, follow-up with a conversation or note, and as appropriate, include a small gift or token of appreciation. Let them know what you've changed to prevent future occurrences.

Example: "We are so grateful that you shared your concerns with us. You have helped us improve care, and we wanted to recognize your courage."

Remember your promises

Ensure you do the things you said you would do.

Document to foster change

Report the incident and your response to your immediate supervisor and/or other departments as appropriate to ensure the issue can be addressed system wide.

CPI's Top 10 De-Escalation Tips

Source: <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/CPI-s-Top-10-De-Escalation-Tips-Revisited>

Be empathetic and non-judgmental

Try not to judge or discount their feelings, their feelings are real, and this may be the most important thing in their life at the moment.

Respect personal space

Stand 1.5 to 3 feet away from a person who's escalating; this decreases a person's anxiety and can help you prevent acting-out behavior. If you must enter someone's personal space to provide care, explain your actions, so the person feels less confused and frightened.

Use non-threatening nonverbals

Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice. Keeping your tone and body language neutral will go a long way toward defusing a situation.

Avoid overreacting

Remain calm, rational, and professional; how you respond to their behavior will directly affect whether the situation escalates or defuses. Positive thoughts like "I can handle this" and "I know what to do" will help you maintain your own rationality and calm the person down.

Focus on feelings

How a person feels is the heart of the matter, but some people have trouble identifying how they feel. Watch and listen carefully for the person's real message. Try saying something like, "That must be scary." Supportive words like these will let the person know that you understand what's happening, and you may get a positive response.

Ignore challenging questions

When a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand. Ignore the challenge, but not the person. Instead, bring their focus back to how you can work together to solve the problem.

Set limits

If a person's behavior is belligerent, defensive, or disruptive, give them clear, simple, and enforceable limits. Offer concise and respectful choices and consequences. A person who's upset may not be able to focus on everything you say. Be clear, speak simply, and offer the positive choice first.

Choose wisely what you insist upon

It's important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not. If you can offer a person options and flexibility, you may be able to avoid unnecessary altercations.

Allow silence for reflection

While it may seem counterintuitive to let moments of silence occur, sometimes it's the best choice. It can give a person a chance to reflect on what's happening and how they need to proceed. Believe it or not, silence can be a powerful communication tool.

Allow time for decisions

When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to think through what you've said. A person's stress rises when they feel rushed. Allowing time brings calm.