

## The Keys to Unlocking a Great Discharge Summary

Physicians and other practitioners need to know details about the care a patient receives during an inpatient hospital stay. The hospital discharge summary is an invaluable source for this information. Discharge summaries may improve patient outcomes by providing for continuity and coordination of care, and a safe transition to other care settings and providers.

Researchers in the field of Transitions of Care look at various approaches to improve the discharge process. For example, they categorize interventions as pre-discharge interventions that may include patient education, discharge planning, medication reconciliation, and scheduling a follow-up appointment; post-discharge interventions could involve a follow-up phone call, communication with the ambulatory provider, or home visits; and finally bridging interventions that may involve transition coaches, patient-centered discharge instructions, and clinician continuity between inpatient and outpatient settings.

The primary mode of communication between the hospital care team and aftercare providers is often the discharge summary, raising the importance of successful transmission of this document in a timely manner. Important elements in the discharge summary, as mandated by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, are:

- The outcome of the hospitalization
- The disposition of the patient
- Provisions for follow-up care including appointments, statements of how care needs will be met, and plans for additional services (eg, hospice, home health assistance, skilled nursing)

This minimal content should be augmented by information critical to the aftercare providers. An essential component is identifying those laboratory or other tests for which final results remain pending at the time of discharge<sup>1</sup>.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) Provider Satisfaction Survey includes questions about PCPs' satisfaction with hospital discharge summaries. In 2018, we see a dramatic drop in PCPs receiving a hospital discharge summary after discharge compared to 2017. Of those received, the timeliness and content remained consistent and overall satisfaction with continuity of care slightly improved. The results demonstrate opportunities for improvement across the board, but most importantly making sure the PCP receives a timely discharge summary.

### BCBSTX Provider Satisfaction Survey – Hospital Discharge Summary Feedback



Survey Questions	BCBSTX 2015 (Goal 85%)	BCBSTX 2016 (Goal 90%)	BCBSTX 2017 (Goal 90%)	BCBSTX 2018 (Goal 90%)
When your patients are admitted to a hospital, are you sent summary information after the discharge?	72%	80%	72%	59%
When you receive hospital discharge information, does it reach your office within a timely manner?	80%	84%	83%	83%
When you receive hospital discharge information, does it contain adequate information about medications at discharge?	88%	89%	87%	89%
Overall satisfaction with continuity of care	76%	80%	74%	79%


Communications between the hospital and PCP are critical to helping provide a smooth and long-lasting transition of the patient to the next level of care. Continuity and coordination of care may avoid miscommunication or delays in care that may lead to poor outcomes.

BCBSTX applauds practitioners that have adopted a structured approach to discharge summaries and strongly encourages those who have not, to consider adopting this practice.

1. **Hospital discharge and readmission** [Online] / auth. Eric Alper MD, Terrence A O'Malley, MD, Jeffrey Greenwald, MD // UpToDate. - January 2019. - <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/hospital-discharge-and-readmission#H11>.



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