

COVID-19 Response: Key Department Rapidly Revises Operations and Communications



With visits canceled and workflow disrupted due to COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions, a high-volume outpatient department needed to rapidly revamp its communications strategy to match its current status and future needs.

Problem to Solve

With visits canceled and workflow disrupted due to COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions, a high-volume outpatient department needed to rapidly revamp its communications strategy to match its current status and future needs. With most of the department's clinicians and staff members deployed on an as-needed basis, the department's prior operation and communication practices were no longer feasible.

Despite a massive work disruption, the department still had to function and keep all key stakeholders abreast of key department information and changes. Clinicians and staff members, whether on-site or working from home, wanted to know how to work within this new dynamic. Critical external partners sought input on system needs and workflow. Patients required easy access to rapidly evolving information on new department schedule, process and procedure standards.

Strategy and Tactics

Freed Associates (Freed) developed and implemented a new department-wide operations and communications

strategy addressing all stakeholders' interests. These new guidelines and tactics, based on the latest COVID-19 mitigation standards for essential workplaces, were based on revised standards for patient care, including prioritizing visit types and communicating with patients. Operationally, the strategy specified new standards for scheduling appointments, managing resources, leveraging available staff and even handling waiting room layouts. A new dedicated web site provided department updates.

In addition to these new daily workflow and communication standards, Freed also built in a plan for full resumption of services for the department, to ensure a seamless operational transition when required. The emphasis was on providing the department's leadership with a turnkey solution to manage both its current needs and resume normal operations, with minimal clinical and financial impact.

Results and Conclusion

Based on its new operation and communication guidelines, the department is able to function and communicate with its key stakeholders more effectively and efficiently during this time. With service resumption plans also in place, the department is also ready to quickly ramp up regular operations.