

Moving Health Care Facility Locations? Eight Ways to Ensure Your Move Runs Smoothly



As seen in Becker's Hospital Review.

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Whether your health care organization is physically moving to take advantage of a new location or as part of an organizational need for more space or downsizing, it can be a challenging experience for staff and patients alike.

Planning for the move of a health care organization requires specialized skills and experience, and significant amounts of planning time to execute properly. By selecting an appropriate manager for the project, identifying and mitigating any issues, and having a well-designed strategic transition plan, you'll have a great opportunity to emerge a hero and not be the victim of unforeseen circumstances.

The following checklist is designed to help develop and earn acceptance for your transition plan, avoid common pitfalls, and prepare your organization for a successful move.

1. Select the Right Person to Lead the Charge

Your most important decision is selecting the person responsible for planning and executing your move. Often, organizations lack someone internally who is available and willing to do the job. Can your internal candidates answer yes to the following?

- Have you planned a major move in the past for a medical practice or hospital department?
- Do you have a strong background in budget development? Risk management?
- Do you have the managerial bandwidth?

If “no” to any of the above, you may want to hire an experienced project manager to ensure planning through execution runs smoothly. Or, consider hiring a professional consultant to work with an internal coordinator. The consultant should have experience in managing moves for health care organizations.

2. Identify Departments Impacted by the Move/Transition

If moving to a new location, every department will be affected. When you are relocating departments within an existing location, you may only need to deal with the members of those departments. But even with intra-office moves, some departments, such as IT and Finance, will need to get involved. You’ll want the Finance department’s support for budget approvals and payments. IT will need to be on hand to install or reconfigure computer systems and equipment.

Engaging with all involved departments leads to more seamless transitions during the move. For example, by engaging early on with IT, you’ll have a much better idea of when to upgrade technologies, identify and develop training resources and arrange for a cutover plan. Your job here is to help affected staff members prepare for the move, individually and in aggregate.

3. Identify and Engage All Stakeholders

Develop a stakeholder analysis to determine all move participants. Create a governance model and elect individuals in each department, or external organization, who can make strategic and funding decisions.

Common stakeholders for health care organizations include:

- **C-suite:** Determine who makes the ultimate decision to approve your transition plan or changes to it
- **Legal:** Determine how long it will take to get legal review of new (or changes to) business agreements or licenses, independent contractor contracts, provider contracts, building leases, and all other move-related documents
- **OSHPD:** Ensure your new environment meets state-mandated health care facilities guidelines
- **Corporate strategy:** Discuss what corporate directives may be affected by the cost of the move
- **IT:** Partner with IT to determine changes in communications systems, networking services, or equipment, and the impact of the changeover to workflow
- **HR:** Work with HR to determine if your move will require additional staffing or involve downsizing. Ensure HR has

a plan to create training programs for the medical and support staff, and union staff (if pertinent)

- **Facilities:** Make the organization's project manager for construction a key partner in your move and explore ways to make the new space patient-friendly and accessible
- **Finance:** Create a funding plan that serves as a guideline for all financial decisions related to the transition. Determine who will monitor the budget and handle reporting, and set up a payment system
- **External participants:** Determine who is responsible for interacting with construction and architectural firms and who in these firms are your primary contacts
- **Patients:** Determine how and how often to best communicate with patients so that their care is not negatively impacted

4. Prepare a Communications Plan

Throughout your transition, you will need to communicate across all departments, keeping management, employees, suppliers, partners and contractors informed and aware of the roles they each need to play and the activities they need to complete to make the transition go smoothly. Develop and time external communications to keep customers/patients informed about the move and where they need to go. Your top-level communication plan needs to include the following:

- Internal and external communications
- Appropriate messaging for each audience
- Timetable for information dissemination

5. Align Finance with Strategic Direction

The cost of your move may affect the strategic direction of your organization or departments.

- Prepare for contingencies, including delays or unexpected costs such as early termination fees
- Conduct a sensitivity analysis to understand the impact to your budget in case of unforeseen circumstances
- Monitor and revise estimates often to ensure your project is on-track

6. End-to-End Planning

Plan for all activities impacting your move and the time and cost required for each activity. Common considerations include:

- Availability – know that prior to move-in, permits must be obtained, utilities turned on, and medical personnel

must be trained

- Purchasing of materials and equipment
- A complete inventory of all systems and equipment
- The cost of the move itself (including the mover and packing materials)
- Set-up of furnishings and IT systems (e.g., chairs, network, desktops, software, and phones) and electronics (e.g., PA system, TVs in hospital rooms)
- Interior decorating
- Space planning (determining optimal space needed for reception, clinical stations, waiting rooms, exam rooms)
- Communication costs (e.g. mailings, calls, posters, graphic design, and printing of materials)
- Coordination, triage and costs of moving hospital patients from one facility to another

7. Create a Realistic Project Plan

When planning your move, it's critical to have your stakeholders' full understanding and acceptance. Your project plan should address the following questions:

- What is your timeline for moving into the new facility or space?
- What key initiatives are in progress that could potentially impact your timeline?
- What holidays, events, vacation times, and other activities might impact the timeline?
- Working from deadlines, what needs to happen when? What if?
- What risks have you identified and what mitigation strategies do you have in place?
- What is your contingency plan?

8. Prepare to Mediate

Conflicts are almost inevitable with any transition. Things rarely go exactly as planned, so flexibility is key. When a dispute can't be resolved quickly, it helps to have a good mediation plan in place. Often, the move represents a change management initiative, which means it is likely you will also need to explore resource management methodologies, potential changes in roles, etc.

Conclusion

Given the importance of cost-containment, it is crucial to have the elements above addressed long beforehand. Be ready to make adjustments throughout the process; as with any move, adaptability is important. While a strategic plan may not make your move fun, it can certainly make it less stressful.