



REDUCING READMISSIONS

Assessment/Root Cause Analysis Toolkit

A root cause analysis (RCA) is a process designed to identify primary or underlying causes of why avoidable hospital readmissions occur at your organization and in your community. Because it focuses on identifying processes that can be redesigned to reduce the risk of readmissions and patient harm, a root cause analysis allows you to make decisions based on collected data and facts. This process can promote the use of limited resources be utilized efficiently. There are a variety of tools that can be used in the RCA process; this toolkit provides links to resources and tools to accomplish common RCA steps.

Many of the resources listed below are from the Ohio KePRO Quality Improvement Workbook, also available for download as a 32-page [Word document](#).

1 Step 1: Plan the Root Cause Analysis Approach

ACTION STEPS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Form or join a team with appropriate representation to address care transitions and reducing readmissions. ■ Determine a strategy and develop a plan to conduct the root cause analysis. 	Forming a Team (QI Workbook Worksheet A) Organizational Assessment/Root Cause Analysis

2 Step 2: Collect Data

ACTION STEPS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess data to identify the drivers of readmissions in your organization or community. ■ Select population data related to readmissions for assessment. ■ Collect data on transfer communication from all organizations receiving patients from other providers. 	Population Health Worksheet Patient Transfer Form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Track and investigate acute care transfers. 	Acute Care Transfer Log – Worksheet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Gain insight from patients, caregivers, providers and other stakeholders. Interview a minimum of 10 patients and caregivers. ■ Convene cross-setting meetings with community members to discuss factors that may impact patient care. Include patients, physicians, pharmacists, paramedics, and other healthcare providers and stakeholders. ■ Review patients who have been readmitted. ■ Conduct both retrospective and concurrent chart reviews. 	Patient Caregiver Interview Guide IHI Hospital Chart Review tool Sample Focus Group Questions Readmission Root Cause Analysis Tool – Inpatient Facility Quality Improvement Tool for Review of Acute Care Transfers (INTERACT tool for long-term care) Post ACH/ROC Audit and Tally Tool (Home Health Agency Chart Review Tool)

ACTION STEPS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Utilize process mapping or process observation or value stream mapping tools to assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Admission process □ Discharge process □ Transition process ■ Consider mapping cross-setting processes (e.g., hospital to home health or hospital to skilled nursing facility) 	<p>Current Process Analysis (QI Workbook Worksheet G)</p> <p>Process Observation (QI Workbook Worksheet H)</p> <p>Process Mapping (QI Workbook Appendix C)</p> <p>Swim Lane flowchart (QI Workbook Appendix D)</p> <p>Process Observation Form: Workflow (QI Workbook Appendix E)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Observe patients being admitted, educated and discharged in the usual manner for your organization. 	<p>Patient Admission Process Assessment Tool</p> <p>Patient Discharge Process Assessment Tool</p> <p>Patient Transfer Process Assessment Tool</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assess home care agency compliance to identify practices associated with reducing readmissions. 	<p>HHA Process of Care Chart Review Tool</p>

3 Step 3: Analyze Data

ACTION STEPS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Working as a team, utilize quality improvement tools to identify root causes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 5 Whys □ Cause and Effect/Fishbone ■ Assess findings; ask probing questions. ■ Identify causes vs. effects or symptoms of underlying issues. ■ Discuss findings with the team. 	<p>The 5 Whys worksheet</p> <p>Cause and Effect (Fishbone) (QI Workbook Worksheet F)</p> <p>Root Cause Analysis Summary Discussion Tool</p> <p>INTERACT Quality Improvement Summary Worksheet</p> <p>SWOT Analysis (QI Workbook Worksheet I)</p>

4 Step 4: Select Interventions

ACTION STEPS	RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Select interventions to test. ■ Consider interventions that address identified root causes. ■ Consider interventions that address patient care and communication processes that occur at key timeframes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Prior to discharge □ During transition □ Post-discharge (community) 	<p>Process Improvement Plan (QI Workbook Worksheet K)</p> <p>Intervention Crosswalk</p> <p>National Transitions of Care: Care Transition Bundle</p>

+ Additional Resources

[Lean Six Sigma](#) – Basic information about Lean and Six Sigma process streamlining methodologies, and their application to healthcare; includes links to related tools and resources.

[Community Care Transitions Toolkit](#) – Guides you through each step of your care transitions improvement efforts, including participation, community engagement, root cause analysis, and measurement. Developed by the Integrating Care for Populations and Communities National Coordinating Center.

[Next Step in Care](#) – United Hospital Fund campaign site offers easy-to-use guides for family caregivers and healthcare professionals to promote safe and smooth care transitions, with a focus on planning, clear communication, and ongoing care coordination.

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