

Help patients plan ahead for care

An emergency department (ED) visit can cost up to 10 times the rate of an urgent care center or PCP visit and often involves a long wait time.

Best practices to help your patients plan ahead for care

Pre-recorded, on-hold messaging

- Include information about when to go to the ED or call 911, along with a list of symptoms, such as crushing chest pain; severe shortness of breath; debilitating headache; facial weakness, drooping, numbness, weakness on one side of your body, inability to talk or use limbs; suicidal or homicidal thoughts.
- Share your specific office hours, noting evening or weekend availability. If you offer virtual appointments, include information about the symptoms that can be treated virtually (e.g., allergies, cold and flu, urinary tract infections) and how to schedule an appointment.
- Direct patients to on-call providers or a 24-hour nurse line for support.

Patient outreach

Identify patients who may be overutilizing the ED:

- Send them a follow-up letter with information about their care options (when to seek services from their PCP, urgent care clinic or ED and the estimated out-of-pocket costs for the different sites of service). Include the hours of operation and contact information for their PCP and the nearest urgent care options. See page 2 for an example letter and page 4 for an example educational flyer.
- You may also include a survey to ask them the reason for the ED visit, whether they called your clinic before going to the ED and how your office may help support them in avoiding unnecessary trips to the ED. See page 3 for an example survey.
- Review the patient's utilization during the next three to six months to monitor behavior change.

Resources

Educate patients during and after their visit, using the following resources included in the [Care Options Toolkit](#), available on the homepage of our provider website: **asuris.com**.

- Share these flyers with patients during their visits (available in English and Spanish):
 - *Asuris Know Where to Go for Care*
 - *Asuris Know Your Behavioral Health Options*
 - *Healthwise Your Health: Using the Emergency Room Wisely*
- Include copies of the flyers or information in the office visit summary about when to seek services from their PCP, urgent care or ED. See page 4 for an example educational flyer.
- Members can also login to their **asuris.com** account or call the number on the back of their member ID card to learn about their care options.

We have been educating our members about their care options through content on our public and authenticated member websites, blogs, social media and email campaigns. In addition, our care managers contact members who have had several ED visits to help educate them about their care options.

November 2023



Sample ED utilization follow-up letter

DATE

Patient name

Street address

City, State ZIP

Follow-up on your emergency room visit

Dear First Name,

Based on our records, you were seen in the emergency room (ER) on <INSERT DATE> for an issue we might have been able to help you with.

Our clinic would like to help you when the care you need is not an emergency, and we want you to better understand your care options. Knowing where to go for care can save you time and money. See the enclosed flyer for more information.

When your primary care provider (PCP) is not available, we have an on-call provider line, available for you to call for care advice from <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS> at <INSERT NUMBER>. The provider can help you determine if an ED visit is appropriate.

<Express Care Department/Urgent Care> is a walk-in clinic and can help you when your PCP is not available. The clinic can treat acute illness (colds/flu), minor injuries, urinary tract infections, rashes and more. <Express Care Department>Urgent Care> is open <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS>.

Please call us at <INSERT NUMBER> with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,

<NAME OF CLINIC>

Sample ER use patient survey

Based on our records, you were seen in the emergency room (ER) for an issue that we might have been able to help you with. We would like to understand how we can better support your care needs.

Please complete this short survey and return it to our office in the postage-paid envelope provided.

1. Who is your primary care provider (PCP)?
2. What was the main reason for going to the ER versus seeing your PCP or going to an urgent care clinic?
 - My PCP didn't have an appointment available in the time that I needed.
 - I went to the ER on the weekend or after hours.
 - I don't have transportation during business hours.
 - Other: Please explain using the space below:
3. Did you call our clinic before going to the ER?
 - No
 - Yes, I was advised to go the ER.
 - Yes, my PCP was not available. (As a reminder, you can see other providers at our clinic when needed.)
4. How can <INSERT NAME OF CLINIC> help support you and your health needs in the future to help you know your care options and potentially avoid an expensive ER visit that you might not need?

<INSERT NAME OF CLINIC>

Our office is open from <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS>. If your primary care provider (PCP) is unavailable, you can ask to schedule an appointment with another provider in our clinic. We also offer virtual visits (phone or video visits) for some conditions. Call our office to schedule an in-person or virtual visit at <INSERT NUMBER>.

We also have an on-call provider line, available for you to call for care advice from <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS> at <INSERT NUMBER>. The provider can help you determine if an ER visit is appropriate.

<Express Care Department>Urgent Care> is a walk-in clinic and can help you when your PCP is not available. They can treat acute illness (colds/flu), minor injuries, urinary tract infections, rashes and more. <Express Care Department/Urgent Care> is open <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS>

See the enclosed flyer for more information about where to go for care.

Sample educational flyer

Primary care provider (PCP)	Urgent care	Hospital emergency room
<p>Schedule an appointment with <INSERT NAME OF CLINIC> for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allergies - Annual check-ups - Preventive care - Immunizations - Medication refills - Treatment of chronic conditions - Acute illness (cold/flu) - Minor injuries - Health and wellness 	<p>If you're unable to schedule an appointment with your PCP, visit an urgent care clinic. Urgent care clinics can treat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allergies - Low back pain - Stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhea - Cold, flu, pneumonia, asthma - Minor injuries (burns, sprains, small fractures) - Infections (eye, ear, nose, throat, skin, genital, urinary) 	<p>Go to the nearest emergency room (ER) for life-threatening illnesses and injuries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Severe injury or pain - Severe burn - Severe asthma attacks - Uncontrollable bleeding - Chest pain with or without shortness of breath - Weakness on one side of the body and/or slurred speech - Kidney stones
<p>Contact our office to schedule an appointment with your PCP at <INSERT NUMBER>. <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS> <INSERT ADDRESS></p> <p>Don't have a PCP? Call our office to establish care.</p>	<p><INSERT URGENT CARE CLINICS> <INSERT HOURS AND DAYS> <INSERT ADDRESS></p>	<p><INSERT HOSPITAL> <INSERT ADDRESS></p>
Out-of-pocket costs: \$	Out-of-pocket costs: \$\$	Out-of-pocket costs: \$\$\$

In-home urgent care

DispatchHealth can treat urgent illness and injuries (e.g., urinary concerns, extremity injuries, swelling, confusion, weakness, vomiting, rash, cellulitis, abscesses and more) and perform a range of procedures (e.g., lab tests, administering IVs and changing catheters). They are available from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. in the Spokane, Washington, area. Learn about their services and how to make an appointment in the [Care Options Toolkit](#), available from the homepage of our provider website.