



# READMISSIONS INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

## OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERVIEW

To facilitate the development of effective strategies that minimize hospital readmissions for patients. By gathering qualitative insights on the factors that contributed to a readmission, these interviews provide valuable insights to validate or challenge assumptions derived from aggregated readmissions data. This comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes enables hospitals to create targeted approaches for preventing future hospital visits.



## TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

-  **Anyone with lived experience being readmitted to your hospital will have critical insights for your quality improvement efforts!**
-  **Family caregivers of those patients who required a readmission can also be great people to interview.**
-  **Leverage your hospital's readmission data to identify populations that have high readmission rates.**
-  **Do your readmitted patients include non-English speakers? Be prepared to leverage an interpreter for inclusive and diverse engagement.**

## PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Develop clear objectives for the interview. These objectives will be regularly communicated and reinforced with the participants prior to the interview.

Prepare a set of questions you have the patient or family caregiver. It is important to ask open-ended questions that encourage them to share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts.

**The interview should begin with open-ended questions that open the opportunity to hear broad insights. Things like:**

-  *How have you been feeling physically and emotionally since you left the hospital?*
-  *Tell us about your initial experience at the hospital and what brought you back after you went home.*
-  *When you left the hospital, did you feel that you had everything you needed to continue to recover at home?*
-  *What influenced or contributed to your return to the hospital after being discharged initially?*

-  *As you reflect on your time in the hospital, were there opportunities for the hospital staff to better prepare you for going home?*
-  *Were there any specific challenges or difficulties you faced in managing your health after leaving the hospital?*
-  *Did you encounter any challenges, obstacles, uncertainties with the plans we made when we got you home?*
-  *What kind of support system do you have at home or within your community to help you manage your health condition?*
-  *Is there anything else you think is important for me to know about your overall health journey?*

**Ask follow up questions based on the person’s responses. This will help you gather valuable information and gain a comprehensive understanding. Some examples may include:**

-  *Were you able to reach a doctor or healthcare provider when you became concerned about you or your loved one’s condition? If so, who did you talk to and what was said?*
-  *Did you have any issues with the medications you needed after leaving the hospital?*
-  *Could you share your experience with coordinating home health services?*
-  *Did you have medical equipment, such as oxygen, etc. delivered to your home? How did that go?*
-  *Did you receive a follow up phone call from hospital staff once you were home? How well do you feel the healthcare professionals communicated?*

## WHO SHOULD CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW? .....

Consider leveraging Community Health Workers. Utilizing interviewers who resemble and resonate with the patient or family caregiver enhances trust, encourages candid responses, boosts confidence, and elevates their comfort level.

Plan for documentation via voice recorder, transcription service, or notetaker.

Consider arranging a small stipend or some token of appreciation for participating.

Organize interview logistics, including meeting location and a plan for managing privacy, security, and timing.

 **Meeting off-site at a coffee shop or virtually may be more comfortable for the participant.**

## MAKING THE INVITATION .....

Recognize the experience of being readmitted was likely not a positive one for the patient or their family caregiver. Setting clear expectations that learnings from their lived experience will inform how the hospital improves processes to avoid readmissions for others. This sets a foundation for an impactful interview.

An effective invitation starts with the purpose of the interview, covers what to expect during the interview, clarifies how the information provided will be used, and includes all key logistics.



## EXAMPLE INVITATION

Dear Mrs. Smith,

I'm contacting you today to follow up on your recent hospitalization and subsequent return to our care. We refer to that sequence of events as a readmission. Our goal is to reduce the number of times our patients return to the hospital because we believe that reflects better overall health for our patients.

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview so that our hospital can learn more about your patient journey. The aim of this interview will be to identify opportunities for us to improve the way we provide care, so that patients leave our hospital with everything they need to be healthy at home. Learning from your experience will inform our efforts to address potential gaps in our current processes.

Please know your insights will only be used internally, and shared anonymously with our quality improvement team.

We would like to schedule at your convenience, with a focus on the week of June 12-17. The interviews can be conducted in person or online at your convenience and will last approximately 60 minutes. If you are interested and available, or if you have additional questions, please contact me.

Thank you,

Alma Garrett  
Acme Medical Center  
ag@\*mc.vom  
123-123-1234

**Flesch-Kincaid  
Readability Score 6.1**

Indicates a 6th grade reading level.  
Easy to read. Conversational English.



## CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

- Remember to actively listen, don't shy away from express your empathy, Ask follow up questions based on the patient's responses.
- Keep in mind the person's experience is their own. There are no right or wrong responses. Embrace what you hear with an open mind and heart. This is your opportunity to learn from the participant's lived experiences.
- Review the objectives of the interview and thank the patient or family caregiver for taking the time to help your hospital improve.
- Be sure to get permission to record from each participant. Let them know why it is necessary for enabling your full presence and attention to what they are sharing.
- Introduce all people present in the interview (interpreter, note taker, QI team members)
- Reinforce how the information they share will be used. Including the scope of the team who will have access the recordings, notes, or transcripts.
- Ask your questions with authentic curiosity and compassion for their experience.

## CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

Express gratitude! Acknowledge the courage it takes for patients to share their experiences in this way and how critical their insights are for the hospital's efforts to improve. Offer any token of appreciation you can.

## THINGS TO AVOID DURING THE INTERVIEW

Avoid invalidating the patient's experience. It might be tempting to explain away why a certain occurrence happened or infer the patient's experience as misunderstanding. Interviewers must remain neutral seekers of information.

Be cautious not to excessively validate the patients' experience, as it may divert the conversation toward addressing specific issues in the immediate moment - potentially detracting from our overall improvement efforts.

Avoid defending issues that arise from the person's narrative or defensive statements aimed at keeping the hospital in a good light. The value is their unique perspective and what is true for that individual.

Avoid any judgements or statements about the patient's "compliance" with their care plan. Deeper understanding into the "why" when care plans fall short can unlock the key drivers to many readmissions. Be cautious of assumptions. By engaging patients on a deeper level, we frequently discover areas where we can improve quality of care. This includes opportunities to better collaboratively develop person-centered care plans as well as address any breakdowns in the continuity of care.