



10 Steps to an ER/Dental Referral Program

Wisconsin Case Study

Step 1

Form a team of dentists who are interested in developing a system to assist hospitals with patients who present to the Emergency Room with dental pain. Establish a time each day to accommodate those ER dental pain referrals.

Step 2

Meet with the care coordinators at each hospital involved. Discuss your plan and ask to be scheduled on the staff meeting agenda for the Emergency Department.

Step 3

Prepare a dental “Vital Signs” type of oral health education overview for the ER staff. Discuss the referral process that you would like to follow. Review the type of dental pain patient they typically see in the ER.

Step 4

Become a participating Medicaid dental provider. Become familiar with the expectations of the particular state program such as credentialing, documentation and prior authorization protocols.

Step 5

When the process has been in place for a while and you have had some referrals from the ER, do a brief report at your local county dental society. Some may want to participate, and others may want to provide a different type of support.

Step 6

If you are in an urban area, visit Emergency Departments of various hospitals. Follow the same process: get a spot in the staff meeting of the Emergency Department; do an in-service to help them understand the dental world more clearly.



Step 7

Keep statistics on how many referrals come in from the ERs. Follow up with the Board of the hospital to inform them of the program you are operating.

Step 8

Meet with the dental director of the local FQHC or other safety net clinic to compare notes on ER referrals. Involve an oral surgeon to discuss possible backup strategies. Discuss cases/indicators that may involve hospital admissions.

Step 9

Develop a plan for follow-up care. Educating patients may encourage them to approach a dental office before heading into the ER. Follow up with the Emergency Department to check on revisit rates.

Step 10

Write an article for the state dental journal or local newspaper about the ER referral program and the successful partnership with the local hospital.

Questions? Contact us!

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For more information about ER referral programs and the American Dental Association's *Action for Dental Health: Dentists Making a Difference* campaign, visit [ADA.org/action](https://ada.org/action).