FLOWCHARTING FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

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WHAT IS FLOWCHARTING?

“A visual representation of the sequence of steps in a process” (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, QI Essentials Toolkit, 2017)

USES OF FLOWCHARTING

- According to the American Society for Quality (2018):
  - Develop understanding of how a process is done.
  - Study a process for improvement.
  - Communicate to others how a process is done.
  - Improve communication between people (or departments) involved in the same process.
  - Document a process.
  - Plan a project.
USES OF FLOWCHARTING

- Mainly used to show a process as it currently stands
- Best if used in the early stages for quality improvement
- Can help provide an outline of a policy like best practice, SOP, etc.
- Identify problems such as:
  - Steps that don’t add value e.g. delays
  - Unnecessary work or duplication
  - Added expenses
  - Breakdowns in communication

HOW TO MAKE A FLOWCHART FOR QI

- Get the people who know the process best in the room.
- Start by defining the first and last step of the process. This helps everyone have a clear understanding of where the process begins and ends.
- With flowchart symbols, or sticky notes, write out each step of the process as it currently works, NOT as it should work, from beginning to end.
- Review the chart for accuracy and completeness.
- Assign action items to team members to fill in unfamiliar steps and verify accuracy.
- When the flowchart is complete and accurate, analyze it, use it, revisit it, and keep it up to date.

FLOWCHARTING SYMBOLS

- Start or end of a process
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- Start or end of a process
- One step of the process
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- One step of the process
- Decision point (yes/no question)

Example: Flowchart

FLOWCHARTING SYMBOLS

- Start or end of a process
- One step of the process
- Decision point (yes/no question)
- Document
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- Start or end of a process
- One step of the process
- Decision point (yes/no question)
- Document
- Connector; Link to another page or flowchart
- Direction of flow

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE…

- Breakdown 1 item per sticky note. Make sure you're not including more than 1 step or decision in the process per note.
- Remember this is just showing the system as it is not how it SHOULD be. That comes later on in your QI project.
- Begin with the end in mind…defining the first step and the last step/end result in the process are always helpful places to start.

ACTIVITY

- Map out your hospital’s IPP LARC process using sticky notes first, then convert them to the correct flowchart symbols.
- If your hospital doesn’t have an IPP LARC process in place yet, create a flowchart for how patients currently receive LARC.