

6 Easy Ways to Modernize Hospital Transfer Centers





It's Time to Modernize the **Patient Transfer Center**

In spite of their vital function, patient transfer centers have toiled in a technology desert for decades. Too often, transporters are saddled with archaic pagers while overwhelmed phone-based dispatchers juggle a never-ending barrage of calls. As care quality and patient satisfaction are put under the microscope, challenges related to patient transfers are receiving a second look, prompting innovative hospitals to zero in on a key part of the problem: **communication**.



Chronic Challenges (and the Easy Cure)

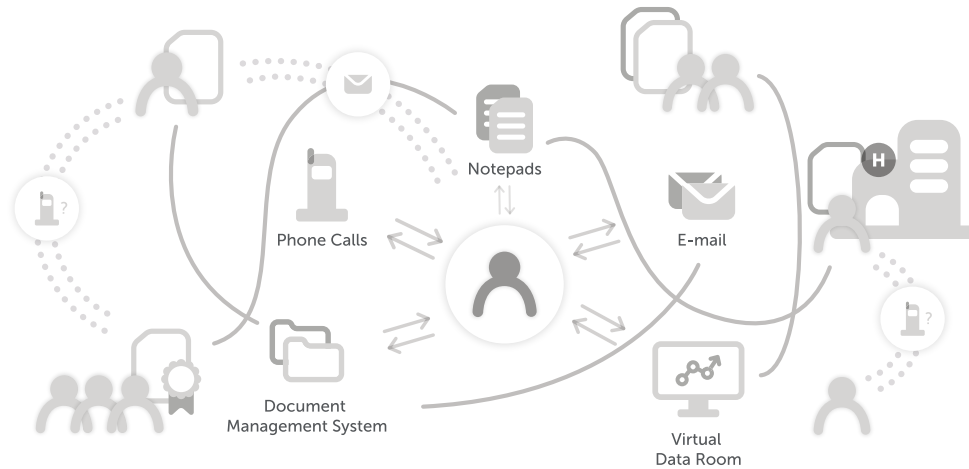
An important step in patient success is ensuring the patient receives the right level of care at the right time. Transfer centers are vital to accomplishing this goal. Despite heroic attempts by transfer center staff, the act of transferring a patient can be cumbersome and inefficient, resulting in delays in patient care and a suboptimal experience for patients, families, and the interdisciplinary care team.

Paging on-call providers and other old-fashioned communication vehicles compound the abundant opportunities for bottlenecks. Without support effective communication and collaboration across diverse healthcare entities, numerous potential challenges in the transfer workflow persist, including:

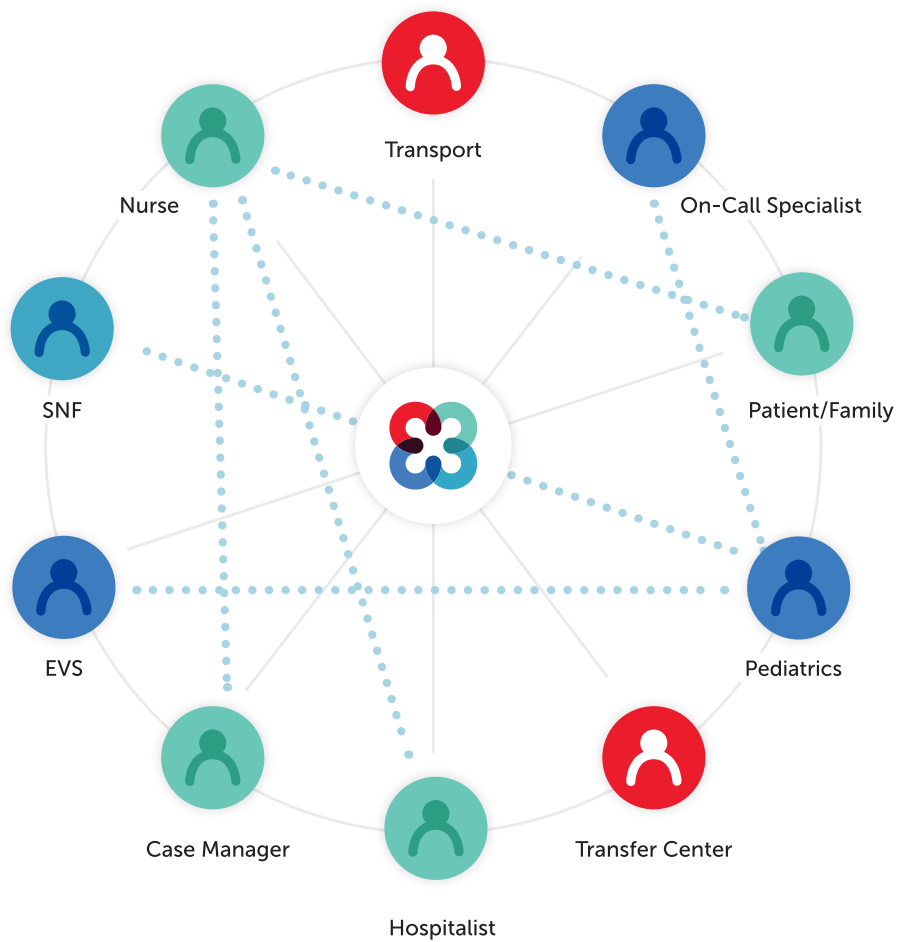
Common Challenges	How Care Collaboration Technology Solves These Challenges
Inaccurate contact information and/or on-call schedule difficult to locate	Care collaboration platforms with integrated on-call calendars and automated role-based messaging eliminate the need to know a specific staff member's name and phone number and allow for instant outreach via secure text, voice, or video.
Multiple people need to have the same information which results in multiple phonecalls	Multiple hospital and transfer center staff can converse via secure text to ensure everyone has the same information in a timely, efficient way.
Admitting physician unavailable for the call, resulting in transfer delay	Texting is less interruptive to workflow and can be managed more quickly than phone calls; replacing calls with asynchronous, secure texting yields faster turnaround times. Automated text escalations can also be utilized to ensure timely response for critical transfers.
Inability to access requisite clinical information such as X-ray, EKG, and imaging; faxes lose clarity, EHRs may not be integrated with PACS, etc.	Physicians and staff can easily and securely text an image of test results, X-rays, wounds, or video assessments. These images can be uploaded to the receiving hospital's patient record when the medical record is created.
Upon acceptance of patients by the physician, no easy way to find which rooms are available on what floor, resulting in more phone tag and transfer delay	Role-based texting to groups or teams produces faster responses than phone calls for room availability. Replacing the call with a text is a more efficient way to communicate bed assignments.
Escalation process is challenging due to the nature of phone communication, the inability to see when voicemails or pagers are acknowledged, and unproductive 'he said/she said' debates	Replacing phone calls with texting creates a timed audit log of interactions to support ongoing improvement initiatives. Sent/read status labels show when messages are received and read. Message archiving can further resolve accountability issues. Automated escalations can also be used to trigger timed text alerts among a preset list of contacts for unacknowledged messages.

The Difference Care Collaboration Solutions Can Bring

From Friction & Frustration



To Efficiency & Connected Care



Proven Path to More Effective Patient Transfers

Improving transfer center communication and collaboration requires you to first set a foundation that aligns to your organization’s strategic mission and vision. By prioritizing these foundational elements, you’ll give your organization the greatest chance of sustainable operational efficiency and success.

Focus	Description	Sample
Governance	Engage senior leaders to create a vision for improvement and a mandate for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with strategic objectives • Time and resource allocation • Accountability mechanisms • Sponsorship from key stakeholder groups
Stakeholders	Identify key resources essential to transfer center communication and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-admitting physicians (e.g., ED) • Accepting physicians (e.g., specialists, hospitalists) • ED charge nurse/supervisor • House supervisor • Patient placement coordinator • Registration/Admitting • Transport/EMS • Care/Case/Utilization Management • Front-line nurses (sending/receiving hospitals) • Clinical Informatics/Information Service
Charter	Define the opportunity, the framework to achieve goals, expectations, and a definition of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What problem are you trying to solve? • What’s in scope/out of scope? • What does success look like? What are the goal metrics? • What are the assumptions and guiding principles? • What are the known risks to manage? • What are the milestones and timelines?
Leading Practices	Outline core communication and collaboration requirements for the transfer center to achieve optimal benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-based communication across enterprise • On-call physician scheduling system • Patient-centric, clinical, and operational secure group messaging • Confirmation when a message has been delivered/read • Ability to text documents/images/video • Priority messaging with alerts • Integration of text alerts with EHR/Bed Tracker • Central communication process • Standard protocols, criteria, processes for transfer appropriateness, physician-physician acceptance, bed placement, level-of-care, handoff • Adequate Wi-Fi and device access
Metrics	Determine how success is measured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of call attempts to reach the right person • Transfer turnaround/placement times • Volume/length of transfer center calls • LOS of transfer center patients • Leakage/out-migration • # of transfers (right patient, right place, right care) • Satisfaction: Patient, physician, referring facility, clinical and transfer center staff • Access to specialty care (support remote regions)

How to Get Started

As you begin tactically planning improvements in transfer center communication, consider the following:

- 1. Identify critical-to-process staff** that must have access to your centralized communication and collaboration solution. These may include:
 - Transfer center team
 - Sending hospital ED physicians and physician leader/CMO
 - Sending hospital ED charge nurse or supervisor
 - Sending hospital house supervisor
 - Receiving hospital physician specialist or hospitalist (admitting physicians)
 - Receiving hospital house supervisor
 - Receiving hospital patient placement/bed coordinator
 - Physicians who directly admit (if transfer center used for that process)
 - Receiving hospital care/case/utilization management
 - Patient registration (depending on workflow)
 - Transport services/EMS
 - Administrators
- 2. Determine which roles are critical to the patient transfer process** such as “on-call” resources and roles reflected in the list above. Next, integrate those roles into your care team collaboration solution. (If automated schedule integration is not feasible initially, staff will need to manually opt into and out of role assignments at the beginning and end of each shift.)
- 3. Determine your implementation approach and sequencing**, being mindful of the need to demonstrate quick wins while understanding that certain regions and hospitals may differ.
- 4. Communicate!** Be sure staff understands the vision, benefit, who it will help, how it will benefit them, what the solution does, when it will be rolled out, and what support will be available.
- 5. Ensure Wi-Fi and devices** are in working order and all essential accounts are established.
- 6. Finalize technology-enabled transfer** workflow, roles and responsibilities, job aids, updates to policies and protocols, and proper staff education.
- 7. Create a closed-loop feedback process** for users to provide feedback on the process for purposes of continuous improvement and scalability.
- 8. Explore further EHR and bed placement integration opportunities** to further automate and improve workflow efficiency and experience.



Temple Health Increases Patient Transport Volume by 43%

Temple Health System's transport dispatchers were overwhelmed with 10 phone calls per minute as transporters reported arrival of the unit, departure with the patient, and arrival at the destination. Using iPod Touches and TigerConnect's Quick Reply feature, transporters replaced phone calls with secure texts for one-to-one, group, and priority messaging that streamlined interfacility transports.

Read the full **case study**

- 300 more transports per night from 700 to 1,000
- Phone calls were replaced by secure text messages
- Department's reputation improved



Need Help? Here's How TigerConnect Improves Transfer Center Operations

TigerConnect takes a holistic approach to improve transfer center communications, including the four areas described below, which are essential for achieving measurable results. This highly reliable approach ensures a strong foundation is in place to support iterative improvement and that those who do the work are empowered and equipped to be successful.



Governance

Build foundation

- Promote "systemization"
- Align goals
- Set strategic priorities
- Practice accountability
- Coach teams to build sustainable communication and collaboration pathways
- Be transparent with metrics reporting and action plans

Sustain and scale the **improvements**



Communication Workflow Design

Forge real-life impact

- Set success measures
- Engage frontline teams to reimagine workflow
- Prioritize opportunities
- Facilitate tech-enabled workflow design
- Coach teams through iterative improvement

Achieve **quick wins** to drive momentum



Enabling Technology

Make it easy

- Ensure Wi-Fi and devices work as intended
- Provide resources to support staged deployment
- Provide side-by-side implementation support
- Conduct end-user training and go-live support

Facilitate seamless care team **collaboration**



Change Management

Care for the team

- Define why the change is necessary
- Paint the vision
- Educate change agents
- Communicate frequently
- Share leading practices
- Customize stakeholder communication
- Provide closed-loop feedback

Equip teams with the **will and skill** to improve



Westchester Reduces Transport Times for Faster Care Delivery and Lower Costs

Westchester Medical Center Health Network significantly reduced the transfer time between its emergency department and its 10 hospitals by eliminating the call center intermediary and allowing providers to directly share patient information using TigerConnect. This improved both patient and provider satisfaction due to faster, better care coordination.

Read the full **case study**

- 13.3-minute reduction in transport times across all facilities
- 11-minute decrease per transport seen by 72% of hospitals
- 34 minutes was the maximum saved by one facility



Our Proven Methodology

TigerConnect’s structured, proven project management methodology illustrated below was developed to consistently improve the reliability and success related to change management by achieving measurable impact across complex organizations.



Discover & Engage

How ready are you to achieve your communication and collaboration vision?

- Strategic priorities
- Staff, provider, and leader engagement in change
- Critical communication paths
- Architecture of technical systems
- Problem definition, priorities, gap analysis
- Success measures



Design

What must you do to achieve your vision?

- Workflows enabled by TigerFlow
- Communication plan
- Actionable measurement and implementation plan
- Change leadership
- Interdisciplinary model for governance



Build & Test

Does the new workflow achieve the intended outcome?

- Small test of change
- Process feedback and requisite modification
- Ongoing communication and change leadership
- Validation of system readiness



Deploy

How do you manage the journey?

- Define why the change is necessary
- Paint the vision
- Educate change agents
- Communicate frequently
- Share leading practices
- Customize stakeholder communication
- Provide closed-loop feedback



Transition & Scale

How do you continue to improve?

- Institutionalize best practices
- Provide oversight for continuous improvement
- Learn from closed-loop feedback process
- Document/share results



About TigerConnect

As healthcare's most widely adopted care team collaboration platform, TigerConnect uniquely combines telehealth, patient texting, and clinical collaboration in a single, easy-to-use, cloud-based solution. Trusted by more than 6,000 healthcare organizations, TigerConnect maintains 99.99% verifiable uptime and nearly 5 billion user sessions each year. To learn more about TigerConnect, visit www.tigerconnect.com.