

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

# Leading Indianapolis Health System Optimizes Patient Flow and Reduces ED Boarding Through Departure Lounge Enhancement

## Key Results:

45% ↓

*Decrease* in ED boarding

250% ↑

*Increase* in departure lounge utilization

18% ↓

*Reduction* in discharge processing time variance





## Overview

As a leading acute care hospital recognized for its commitment to quality care and innovation, this leading Indianapolis health system faced challenges with emergency department (ED) boarding, a common issue in hospitals nationwide. ED boarding, where admitted patients remain in the ED due to lack of available inpatient beds, was causing increased wait times. To address these challenges, they implemented a strategic initiative focusing on optimizing their departure lounge from November 2023 to June 2024.

## Problem

Despite various efforts to improve patient flow, they struggled with significant ED boarding issues. This led to:

- Extended wait times for patients in the ED
- Inefficient use of ED resources
- Challenges in maintaining consistent discharge processes
- Suboptimal utilization of the existing departure lounge

The organization recognized the need for a comprehensive solution that could address these interconnected issues and improve overall patient flow throughout the hospital system.

Despite various efforts to improve patient flow, they implemented a multi-faceted approach to optimize their departure lounge and improve overall patient flow. This led to:

1. **Departure Lounge Redesign:** The physical space was renovated to accommodate more patients comfortably, with amenities such as comfortable seating, entertainment options, and refreshments.
2. **Staff Training:** Nurses and support staff received specialized training on efficient discharge procedures and departure lounge management.
3. **Discharge Planning:** Early discharge planning was implemented, with multidisciplinary teams collaborating to identify potential departure lounge candidates upon admission.
4. **Technology Integration:** A new software system was implemented to track bed availability, predict discharges, and manage departure lounge capacity in real-time.
5. **Patient Education:** Patients and families were educated about the departure lounge concept during their stay, emphasizing its benefits for a smoother transition home.

From November 2023 to June 2024, they maintained consistent ED volume levels, ensuring that any improvements were not due to decreased demand. During this period, the organization achieved significant improvements:

1. **45% Decrease** in ED boarding, from an average of 20

hours per patient to 11 hours

2. **250% Increase** in departure lounge utilization, from an average of 10 patients per day to 35 patients per day
3. **18% Reduction** in discharge processing time variance

## Conclusion

Their strategic focus on optimizing the departure lounge process has yielded remarkable improvements in patient flow, significantly reducing ED boarding and enhancing overall hospital efficiency. This initiative demonstrates the transformative potential of innovative departure lounge strategies in addressing critical healthcare challenges.

Key takeaways from this case study include:

4. **Holistic Approach:** The success of this initiative underscores the importance of a comprehensive strategy that incorporates physical space redesign, staff training, technology integration, and patient education.
5. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Real-time tracking and predictive analytics played a crucial role in optimizing patient flow and resource allocation.
6. **Patient-Centric Focus:** Improvements in patient satisfaction scores highlight the positive impact on the overall patient experience.
7. **Staff Empowerment:** Reduced time spent on discharge-related tasks allows healthcare professionals to focus more on direct patient care.

Looking ahead, they plan to:

- Expand the optimized departure lounge model to other facilities within its network
- Further refine the predictive analytics capabilities to enhance proactive patient flow management
- Develop additional staff training programs to sustain and build upon the initial success

This case study offers valuable insights and a replicable model for healthcare organizations grappling with ED boarding and patient flow challenges. As the healthcare landscapes evolve, this health system's innovative approach serves as a beacon for efficiency, quality care, and patient satisfaction in hospital operations.

