

# How Healthcare Ambulatory Operations Can Begin to Recover and Stabilize Following a Crisis

The last century has shown us that businesses have tremendous capacity to reposition and reinvent themselves in the wake of a crisis.

As healthcare organizations mobilize to restore ambulatory volumes and revenue stunted by deferred services and procedures across service lines, there is potential to create an organization more responsive to consumer needs and better positioned for the future of healthcare.

Recovery and subsequent reposition and redesign plans will have to account for elective procedures with increasing acuity, strained inpatient services and a dynamic regulatory environment — all while maintaining a focus on meeting changing consumer demands and care preferences.

## Understanding What's Needed and What's Next

In healthcare, any transformation plan requires integration of external and internal factors, alignment of systemwide stakeholders, and coordination with the overall health system strategy.

In a crisis recovery phase, this process should be accelerated and requires that organizations make

decisions based on new and evolving data and information. Organizations will have to rapidly assess their current state, analyze data to project future needs, design a plan that considers new information and existing organizational priorities, and build a consensus for the path forward.

Ultimately, a well-designed and executed plan should result in the prioritization of clinical and financial needs as well as a road map for addressing immediate and long-term needs.

As organizations develop plans to redesign and reposition their ambulatory operations, leaders should be able to answer the following questions:

- What efforts have been made to redeploy physicians and other clinical resources? How will redeployment affect plans to pivot operations?
- How does the organization define and classify elective procedures based on risk or acuity?
- How well has the organization deployed the use of telemedicine? How much of this acceleration should be integrated into the care model going forward?
- Does the organization have the appropriate data models, scenario planning tools and dynamic physician-friendly work drivers to answer the above questions? What other operational enablers (e.g., policies, technology, data) are needed to make decisions?

## Understanding Demand and Supply

Leaders must have a clear understanding of the demand and supply objectives of their organizations and their markets, and how each area has been influenced by the crisis.

Demand objectives for recovery strategies should include how to reengage existing consumers while identifying and pursuing new opportunities generated by changing consumer demands. With the right approach, existing demand can be quickly converted to increased volume. Modeling and forecasting should inform the care settings, caregivers, tools and technology that will be necessary to meet market need while assessing capacity for future surges.

Assessing the supply side will reveal the care delivery development that is needed to meet existing and growing needs. Using data and insights, organizations can identify critical internal and external capacity gaps. Organizations will have to consider factors such as location of care (including in-home and virtual care), physician and staff capacity, and the effectiveness of programs targeted at patient health management. Additionally, mechanisms for constantly monitoring inventory levels of critical supplies such as personal protective equipment (PPE) will be required as services resume.

## Communication and Change Management

People, and the cultural strengths and challenges of an organization, play an enormous role in whether transformation plans succeed. The professional and emotional fallout from any crisis increases stressors such as burnout, uncertain financial futures and changing work environments.

Assessing the cultural and change readiness of organizations will be critical to identifying issues that may derail recovery plans. A solid communication plan helps to alleviate change fatigue and build systemwide alignment.

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