

Grays Harbor Community Hospital  
Aberdeen, Washington

# An automated way to prevent readmissions

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After being discharged from a hospital stay, it's important that you follow up with the right treatment and medications, and that you get your questions answered. To make sure discharged patients have the resources they need, Grays Harbor Community Hospital in Aberdeen launched an automated phone system that calls and gives post-discharge care instructions and gives an opportunity for the discharged patient to indicate if he or she needs a follow-up phone call from a hospital caregiver.

The program grew out of the state's Medicaid Quality Incentive, as hospital leaders were looking for a way to touch base with patients after discharge to ensure they were making a smooth transition to being back home. Ultimately, they wanted to lower the risk of readmission, and identify any trouble spots that may lead patients to being readmitted.

The hospital decided to try out the automated phone system in partnership with CipherHealth, which operates the technical infrastructure behind the calls. In a three-month period, the system made 760 calls, which were answered 89 percent of the time. When a follow-up call from a caregiver was requested, caregivers on average returned calls within an hour. This quick response resolved more than 170 issues. Ultimately, the hospital found that those who participated and answered the automated call were 69 percent less likely to be readmitted to the hospital within 30 days.

Thanks to the success of the trial, the hospital decided to permanently institute the call system. Now, the hospital is reaching 85 percent of discharged patients, and feedback from their patients has already helped hospital staff improve the way they communicate.

[Read more here about the automated phone calls from Grays Harbor](#), and [read more here about what WSHA is doing to help our state's hospitals reduce their readmission rates](#). ([Tim Pfarr](#))