

# The Care Plan

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## Overview

Care plans describe the care services and support a patient will receive from his or her healthcare team. They describe patient needs, necessary actions, and care responsibilities. All care plans should be based upon a thorough assessment of the patient's needs. As such, information should be gathered from a variety of sources including the patient, the patient's family members, and the medical professionals involved with patient care. Most importantly, while the care plan ultimately serves many purposes, it should be written for the patient's benefit. Thus, they should be written in cooperation with the patient or the patient's caregiver when possible, use language the patient/caregiver understands, and be formatted in a way that meets the patient/caregiver's needs.

## Content

Care plans should address the following questions:

- Why are we undertaking this plan of care? What led the patient to seek care?
- What do we hope to achieve via the care plan?
- What actions will we take to achieve our care plan goals?
- Who will perform what role in the implementation of the care plan?
- Where will it be carried out? What locations?
- When will the care plan be complete? What are the care timeframes or milestones?

Additionally, care plans should particularly emphasize the patient's role in carrying out the care plan, and it should therefore focus on the patient's strengths in order to encourage the patient to take as much responsibility as possible in the care process. Moreover, all care plans should remain sensitive to the patient's cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, in addition to his or her gender, gender identity, and sexuality. Finally, care plans should identify any patient needs that may not be met by the care plan being undertaken.

## Organization

While there is no one precise model that care plans must follow, they should be organized in a way that emphasizes the most important elements of the plan, and they should make the purpose, actions, outcomes, and responsibilities clear for anyone who reads it.

## Audience

The audience for a care plan will depend upon the particular situation of the patient. For example, if the patient seeks medical attention for a relatively minor ailment, like a rash for example, he or she would be capable of undertaking a care plan his or herself and, as such, would be the target audience of the care plan. If the patient suffers from something more severe that requires assistance from a caregiver (family, friends, home health aide, etc.), the care plan should be written with the caregiver in mind as the target audience.

## Language and Formatting

Care plans must be audience-focused in terms of their content and organization, but also in terms of their language and formatting. While you should always tailor your care plan to the needs of your specific audience, you can follow these general tips to make all care plans more inviting:

- Write in short simple sentences of no more than 15-20 words
- Write short blocks of text; use headings when possible.
- Leave white space between blocks of information
- Use present tense and active voice
- Use bulleted or numbered list to delineate lists of information or sequential action steps
- Consider the vision needs of your audience when you decide what size font you use or how largely you write.

## Additional OWL Resources

- [Paragraphing](#)
- [Tense](#)
- [Active Voice](#)

# Example Care Plan

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## Need

Relief for your painful sinus infection.

## Actions

1. You will fill prescription for antibiotics at the CVS pharmacy near your home.
2. You will take the antibiotic once per day until they are all gone.
3. You will begin taking over-the-counter Flonase once per day to prevent future infections.
4. You will follow up with your regular doctor in two weeks.

## Outcomes

You should experience pain relief within 24-48 hours after beginning the antibiotics. The infection should be completely gone by the time you have completed your antibiotics. The Flonase should help prevent future sinus infections.

## Responsible

John Smith