

A Staged Approach to Implementing Change

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Overview

Introducing a new service into your pharmacy can be challenging. Changing one aspect of your business—such as starting a medication adherence program—often affects other areas, such as workflow or staffing.

Implementing a change in stages can make it easier to implement a new service into your work environment.

The four stages of implementing a change include:

- Explore
- Prepare
- Launch
- Maintain

You can use various strategies within each of the stages of change to support the implementation of a process.^{3,4}

This module explores these strategies in more detail.

The Stages of Change

Stage 0

Explore

Decide if there is a need for change, if a new service should be implemented, and if your pharmacy is ready for implementation.

Stage 1

Prepare

Develop an implementation plan and designate leadership and staff roles to support implementation of a new service.

Stage 2

Launch

Pilot the service, revise the implementation process if necessary, and scale up implementation.

Stage 3

Maintain

Decide whether the service is worth sustaining. If it is, allocate resources and develop policies to make the service a routine part of your pharmacy's operations.

Note: This framework has been adapted from the Active Implementation Framework¹ and the stages of organizational change model.²

Stage 0: Explore

Before you implement a new service, it is important to consider the following questions:

1. Is there a need for change?
2. Should a new service be implemented?
3. Is your pharmacy ready for implementation?

Needs assessment

Your pharmacy should conduct a needs assessment to determine if there is a need for change.

A needs assessment can be either a formal or an informal strategy used to identify and prioritize needs within your pharmacy. To collect information on your pharmacy's needs, your pharmacy might:

- Administer a survey to patients to assess their satisfaction with services
- Assess your pharmacy's workflow and consider using value stream mapping

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- Examine patients' outcomes, such as medication adherence, over the past year
- Have a staff meeting to discuss problems related to the coordination of care with other healthcare providers

Completing a needs assessment like the one provided is helpful when more than one need is identified. Carefully review the chart and consider how it could be used in your pharmacy.

Gathering information

Before determining that a new service should be implemented, your pharmacy should gather information about both the proposed service and alternative programs.

The following strategies can be helpful when gathering information about new services:

- Research the service by obtaining information on start-up costs, maintenance costs, return-on-investment, and likelihood of sustainability. You might gather information from the organization sponsoring the service, professional pharmacy organizations, or schools of pharmacy.
- Talk with a pharmacy that has already implemented the program. Find out the steps they followed, the benefits they observed, the barriers they encountered, and the best practices they recommend.
- Visit another pharmacy that has implemented the program to observe their process for implementation.
- If you have trouble getting information from a pharmacy, consider reaching out to a professional pharmacy organization for assistance in locating another contact.



Needs Assessment Chart

	Problem 1 Non-adherence to medication	Problem 2 Inefficient prescription refill process	Problem 3 Lack of awareness about clinical services
Frequency How often does the problem occur?	We discuss non-adherence with patients and providers 2-3 times per week.	We deal with patients who pick up multiple prescriptions at different times once a week.	We encounter patients who are unaware of our services daily.
Amount How many people are impacted?	About 1/3 of our patients do not adhere to their medications.	About 1/4 of our patients visit the pharmacy multiple times within a month to pick up prescriptions.	About 3/4 of our patients are unaware of our clinical service offerings
Importance How important is the problem?	High importance: It affects patient outcomes and pharmacy performance.	High importance: It affects the pharmacy's efficiency and patient's medication adherence.	Medium importance: It reduces use of services but does not cause patient harm.
Feasibility How likely is it that we can solve the problem?	This problem is feasible to solve. We could introduce adherence packaging.	This problem is not feasible to address until our pharmacy owner purchases a new pharmacy management system.	This problem is feasible to solve. We could attach flyers to prescription bags.
Duration How long has the problem occurred?	This is a longstanding problem.	This is a longstanding problem and has become worse in the past year.	This is a new problem. We just started offering clinical services in the past year.

Note: This chart has been adapted from the Community Toolbox.⁵

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Even if you know which service your pharmacy wants to implement, it is useful to identify alternatives and compare program features like the ones shown here. ²

Identifying a service to implement and gathering background information are important first steps, but you also need to assess whether your pharmacy is ready to take on additional tasks. The strategies described below may prove helpful.

Assess pharmacy readiness

You can assess whether your organization is ready for change in a number of ways. ^{6,7} Criteria to consider include:

- Leadership support: Leaders play a key role in supporting change by setting expectations and rewarding staff. ⁸ Leaders could include pharmacy owners, pharmacy managers, lead pharmacists, and lead technicians. It is important to have the support of all leaders to ensure successful implementation.
- Resources: Consider the resources that will be needed for implementation and whether your pharmacy has a sufficient supply. Resources include technology, staff or staff training, relationships with patients or other key stakeholders, funding, or workspace. ⁹
- Communication strategies: Implementing a new program often requires collaboration among multiple staff members. Consider whether your pharmacy has communication strategies in place to share information between all of the staff that will be involved with implementation of a new program.

You can informally assess your pharmacy’s readiness for change, or you can use a formal assessment ^{6,7} called a SWOT analysis. (SWOT stands for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.”) A SWOT analysis identifies the strengths and weaknesses within your organization, as well as the opportunities and threats in your pharmacy’s external environment, that might affect implementation.

Carefully consider the SWOT analysis provided. How would you complete this for your pharmacy?

Features to Compare

**Evidence**
How has it affected patient outcomes?

**Complexity**
How complex is it?

**Cost**
How costly is it?

**Advantage**
Why is it a better option than other services?

**Adaptability**
Can it can be modified to our workflow?

**Pilot Test**
Can I try it before implementing it?

SWOT Analysis

	Helpful To Acheiving Your Goal	Harmful To Acheiving Your Goal
Internal Origin About Your Organization	Strengths Our pharmacy management system supports medication sychronization.	Weaknesses None of the pharmacy staff has prior experience with medication synchronization implementation.
External Origin About Your Environment	Opportunities We have talked with healthcare providers about medication synchronization and many of the providers we work with indicated interest and support for a medication synchronization program.	Threats We have a lot of high-risk patients who take a large number of medications. Therefore, initial implementation will be time-consuming.

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Identify potential barriers

Prior to implementing a new program, it is helpful to identify potential barriers. It is also helpful to identify strategies for overcoming those barriers.

Common barriers associated with program implementation include:

- Staff barriers: lack of training, resistance to change, lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities
- Leadership barriers: lack of support, lack of communication between leadership and staff
- Resource barriers: competing priorities, lack of time, lack of sufficient staffing

“Before we start any program, we think about whether we have enough staffing, what training our staff might need, and whether our management system will support it.” – Pharmacist

Identify strategies for overcoming barriers

Identifying barriers is an important first step, but it is equally important to then identify strategies for overcoming these barriers.

- Ask your staff: Have a staff meeting to determine if anyone has ideas for solutions.
- Talk with other pharmacies: Talk with a pharmacy that has implemented a similar program to see if they have advice.
- Do some research: Conduct research to learn more about the new service and see whether others have described potential solutions.

For example, you could look for information about the service on *Pharmacy Times*, *US Pharmacist*, *Pharmacy Today* or professional pharmacy organization websites (e.g., NASPA, NCPA, APhA, or pharmacy wholesalers). If you still cannot find any information, conduct research on a similar service that is likely to have comparable implementation barriers.

Conduct consensus discussions

Before implementing a new program, it is important to identify your key stakeholders and consider whether you have their buy-in.

Key stakeholders might include your staff or other project partners (e.g., prescribers, patients, etc.).

Strategies for obtaining buy-in are described in the following section.

“We always involve the people that are implementing the program in our discussions. Anyone that’s a part of the process has a right to provide input. The worst thing that anyone could do when you’re rolling out clinical services is to never talk to the people who are actually going to do the work. ‘Does this make sense to you?’ ‘Can you visually see this working out in your day?’ ‘What details or what things do we need to consider that we’re not seeing?’ ” – Pharmacist

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For staff:

- Obtain input prior to implementation: Ask staff for their opinions about the new service and the resources that will be required to implement it. Asking for input gives staff a chance to offer suggestions prior to implementation and ensures that they are aware of the service from the outset.
- Include staff in implementation planning: Include all staff that will have a role in delivering the new service in the implementation-planning process. Involvement in the planning process increases employees' sense of ownership and buy-in.¹⁰
- Educate staff: Ensure that your staff have the skills and knowledge necessary to implement the new service. Lack of knowledge and confidence about a new product can lead to resistance to change.^{10,11}
- Develop incentives: Create reward and recognition systems to support staff participation in implementation.¹¹ Once implementation is underway, the incentives may no longer be necessary.

For other project partners:

- Obtain input prior to implementation: Similar to staff, it is important to get other project partners' input prior to implementation. Soliciting input gives project partners an opportunity to offer suggestions before you roll out the new service.
- Build on prior relationships when possible: It is easier to obtain buy-in from project partners for a new service if you have already worked together. For example, if you are implementing a service that requires support from healthcare providers, it is preferable to start with providers with whom you have already established a relationship.

Stage 1: Prepare

After you decide to implement a new service, it is time to prepare your pharmacy. Strategies for successful preparation are described below.

Develop a formal implementation plan

It is helpful to develop a plan for how you are going to implement a new service. A sample checklist for developing an implementation plan is provided.

Recruit and designate for leadership

Depending on the scope of your new service, you may need multiple staff members to help lead the program. Leaders can be pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, or other staff members. Positions to consider include:

- Implementation leader: oversees the implementation process

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- Program champion: advocates for the program and provides support to staff members using the new program
- Quality specialist: monitors quality and shares feedback about implementation with pharmacy staff

Revise professional roles and conduct training

In addition to establishing leadership, it is important to identify which staff members should be involved in implementation, what their specific responsibilities will be, and whether they have the sufficient resources and training to carry out those responsibilities.

When revising roles, consider strategies that use pharmacists and pharmacy technicians at the top of their license and delegate other roles to administrative staff when possible.

Stage 2: Launch

Once you have prepared your pharmacy for implementation, you are ready to launch a new service. Strategies for a successful launch are described below.

Pilot test

It is beneficial to pilot test a program before it is implemented. You could, for example, involve only a small number of staff members in initial implementation, or you could test the program in a sub-group of patients before rolling it out to all patients within the pharmacy.

A pilot test can help the pharmacy establish a workflow and overcome barriers with implementation before delivering the program to all patients.

Tailor strategies to overcome barriers and honor patient preferences

Once your program is underway, it is likely that you will have to adapt the service to overcome implementation barriers or make changes to the program based upon patient feedback. For example, you may

Implementation Checklist

Problem statement

Describe the root causes of the problem you are addressing by implementing a new service.

Goals

Develop a succinct and measurable statement of your goals.

Communication strategy

Develop a strategy for sharing information about implementation with all relevant stakeholders.

Key activities

List all activities that need to be carried out to implement the program.

Roles and responsibilities

Describe which staff members will be responsible for which activities.

Timeline

Establish deadlines for all key activities.

Resources

List the resources needed for implementation (e.g., staffing) and how these resources will be obtained (e.g., hiring new staff or revising staff roles).

Measures of success

Identify how you will measure success, such as the number of patients who received the service.

Quality monitoring

Determine how your pharmacy will track measures of success (e.g., pharmacy management system, Excel database).

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have to reduce the length of time it takes to deliver a comprehensive medication review due to patients' availability or change your recruitment strategy if patient enrollment is slow.

Tips for tailoring services

Consider how you are framing the service to your patients. Messages can be framed in a positive light or in a negative light. The strategy that is most effective depends upon the service being introduced.¹² Test different framing options to see which one works best for your patient population and the service you are piloting. An example illustrating the difference between positive and negative framing is provided.

Consider how familiar patients are with pharmacy services. For some pharmacies, your patients may already be familiar with your pharmacy services because you have been delivering these services for a long time. For other pharmacies, you may be introducing this concept to patients for the first time.

You may need to develop educational materials and deploy other strategies to acclimate patients to the idea of pharmacist involvement in clinical care. One strategy is to educate local healthcare providers about your pharmacy's services so that they can then recommend these services to their patients.

Consider how many services are being introduced to a patient. If you are implementing several new services at one time, it may be helpful to prioritize which ones to introduce to your patients. Patients may get overwhelmed or confused if you try to introduce too many services at once.

Stage implementation scale up

Once you have established a workflow and addressed implementation barriers, your pharmacy should be ready to scale up the new program.

Scaling up could involve training more staff, recruiting more patients, or advertising your program to more healthcare providers.

It may be helpful to revise the original implementation plan to include a strategy and timeline for scaling up the program.

Gain/Loss Framing



Gain Framing

Definition: Reminds patients about the benefits that are associated with a clinical service.

Example: A comprehensive medication review can help us make sure your medications are safe for you.

When to use: For services that patients may view as unpleasant (e.g., services that require a lot of a patient's time).



Loss Framing

Definition: Reminds patients about the negative outcomes that are associated with a health problem.

Example: Getting the flu can cause serious problems for pregnant women.

When to use: For services that help patients avoid a risk (e.g., vaccines).

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Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders

As you begin implementing your program, unanticipated challenges might require additional relationship-building with key stakeholders.

For example, you might begin a naloxone-dispensing program in your pharmacy only to realize that you are encountering more patient resistance than you anticipated. To address this issue, you might get advice from other pharmacies that have experienced similar problems or talk with patients whom you've successfully introduced this new service to get their advice on how to introduce the service to other patients.

Stage 3: Maintain

Once implementation is underway, it is important to decide whether to sustain your service. If you choose to move forward, you may need to implement strategies for making the program a routine and permanent part of your pharmacy.

Examine implementation

Not all programs are successful and worth sustaining. It is important to carefully examine how implementation of the program is proceeding and then make a decision about whether it is worth sustaining the program. It is also important to evaluate whether your pharmacy's current process for implementation is effective or if changes need to be made for improvement.

Employees in various roles (e.g., pharmacists, pharmacy technicians) are likely to observe different barriers during implementation, so it is beneficial to solicit opinions from all of the staff involved in the process.

A number of tools are available for assessing and making changes to the implementation process. For example, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement offers guidance on how to use the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA), which is a tool for quality improvement.

Obtain formal commitments and develop resource-sharing agreements

If your program relies on cooperation from external stakeholders, such as other healthcare providers, consider establishing formal commitments and resource-sharing agreements. For example, it may be helpful to establish a collaborative practice agreement for co-managing patients.

Several toolkits are available online that can assist you with developing a collaborative practice agreement. [The one provided here](#) is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Integrate the program into pharmacy's policies and procedures

You can also integrate the new program into your pharmacy's policies and procedures, such as the hiring or performance evaluation process.

If you want to sustain a medication synchronization program, for example, consider developing goals for the program or rewards for achieving those goals that are incorporated into employee performance evaluation.

"Everybody has stuff that gets them a little bit more geared up. In the beginning, we used some prizes to help get things going, and then our team got excited." – Pharmacist

Create centralized support systems (when possible)

If your pharmacy is part of a larger organization, it may be helpful to develop a centralized support system that provides implementation support to your pharmacy and other pharmacies within the same organization.

As an example, consider creating an implementation support or patient engagement specialist position at the central level of your organization to provide support to pharmacy staff at the local level.

Key Takeaways

Implementing a new program in your pharmacy can be a complex process. This module has provided a framework for organizing the implementation of a new program into stages to help simplify the process and provide key implementation strategies for each stage. Key points to remember are listed below.

Things to Remember

Plan before implementation	Preparation is critical for successful implementation and for program sustainability.
Reassess your process multiple times	A number of elements are required for successful implementation, such as establishing an efficient workflow or delegating roles and responsibilities to ensure staff are being used at the top of their license. You may need to reassess your implementation process multiple times and make changes in order to successfully implement a new program.
Be purposeful about sustainability	Before implementation, consider whether it is feasible to sustain a new program. During implementation, decide if the program is worth sustaining. If you decide to keep the program, develop a strategy for making it a routine part of your pharmacy.

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