

# Lean Healthcare Black Belt Project Example

## Improving Patient Flow Through Structured Care Planning



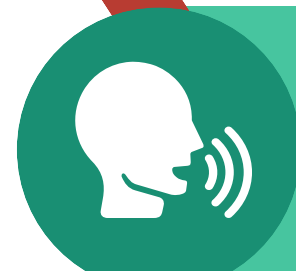
### Objective

The project aimed to improve discharge planning on an inpatient rehabilitation unit by introducing earlier care planning meetings for patients at high risk of discharge delay. The focus was on engaging patients and families sooner, reducing Alternate Level of Care (ALC) days, improving discharge coordination, and standardizing the meeting process for interprofessional teams.

### Lean Tools Utilized



**SIPOC Analysis** – Applied to the discharge planning meeting process to identify key suppliers, inputs, outputs, customers and clarify where variation and delays were occurring.



**Voice of Customer (VOC)** – Captured through patient and family feedback, helping validate that earlier and more structured care planning improved understanding, involvement and confidence in discharge plans.



**Standard Work** – Developed to create consistency in how care planning meetings were triggered, scheduled, structured, and documented, reducing variation across the team.



**PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) Thinking** – Used during implementation to refine the process, including adjusting the screening threshold and protecting standard meeting times after early feedback showed overbooking and scheduling pressure.

### Results



The pilot achieved a reduction of 70 conservable days over a 4-month period, improving patient flow and creating estimated savings of \$56,000, with projected annual savings of \$168,000.



Meeting duration was reduced from a baseline of 45 to 60 minutes to a new standard of 30 minutes, improving efficiency and reducing time spent in non-direct care activity.



The percentage of rehabilitation patients classified as ALC decreased from 15.7% to 10.2%, while ALC days fell from 689 to 400, reflecting improved discharge planning and patient flow.



Survey feedback showed 100% positive responses from participants, with patients and families reporting that the meetings were helpful, informative, and a good use of time.