

How do you take a vacation when you are part of the team? Tips for Psychologists in Integrated Care

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As I look forward to vacation at the end of the month, I also feel some creeping anxiety. Eight days away from the hospital, with a still fledgling practice. My team members have become accustomed to warm hand offs, flexibility, on the spot access to psychology services, and building the value of psychology for the practice has been going well. So what happens when you are not available, and you are the only psychologist for your service? Here are a few tips to help you take a stress free vacation while taking care of the needs of your team and your patients.

- **Network.** Develop a network of psychologists who can cover your service. Ideally, these would be psychologists who can handle emergency consults or phone calls, with enough working knowledge in your specialty area to understand the basic issues.
- **Communicate.** Let the team know exactly how long you will be gone and who will be providing coverage before you leave.
- **Prepare electronically.** Set your out of office message on your email and your electronic medical record system, so other providers will be aware why you're not answering messages and when you will return.
- **Prepare your support staff.** Remind them of coverage, and ask them to offer appointments when you return.
- **Prepare your patients.** Knowing in advance you will be gone can help to prepare patients to schedule before and after your vacation. In addition, having the name of the covering provider can provide reassurance.
- **Set aside time to wrap up.** You'll have a better vacation if your notes and billing are complete, phone messages are wrapped up, and projects are finished. Block at least an hour the day before your vacation just for tying up loose ends.
- **Set aside time to catch up.** It's tempting to overbook the day you come back, but set aside at least an hour or two to review email, chart messages, and get mentally focused for your next clinic.
- **Be generous to others.** Providing quality coverage for your colleagues will make them more likely to be willing to cover for you.
- **Limit your email/telephone contact with work.** This is why you have coverage. If you feel you must check email, set aside a specific amount of time (30 min x2) and stick to the limit.
- **Relax.** It's important for caregivers to practice self-care. Remind yourself that a psychologically healthy provider will provide better care and be a better model for her patients.

Helpful Links

- Self-care Resources: www.apaservices.org/practice/ce/self-care/index
- Taking care of yourself: www.apaservices.org/practice/business/ecp-column/taking-care-yourself
- Staying connected on vacation: www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2013/09/connected-work