

A creative use of space helps meet emergency department needs and expedite care

BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

One of the top pediatric care centers in the nation, Boston Children's Hospital (BCH) implemented fast track in the emergency department (ED) more than a decade ago.

Challenge

But with 60,000 emergency department visits and 25,000 inpatient admissions every year, volume and boarding issues prompted the ED team to look for opportunities to adapt existing clinical space into additional fast track facilities.

Action

Fast Track Extension (FTX) is a physically separate clinical space located in Pre-Op Admitting and is available to the ED from 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. on weekdays and 2 p.m. to 1 a.m. on weekends and holidays. The additional repurposed space allows ED to expand fast track capacity to six rooms with another team on shift, allowing low acuity patients to be seen and treated in approximately 90 minutes.

A triage nurse determines a patient's suitability for fast track, ESI level 4 or 5, and the clinic is staffed with a nurse, one to two pediatric-boarded urgent care physicians, a clinical assistant and a registration clerk. Providers have access to labs, radiology, EKG and patients are seen and discharged exclusively from FTX. A considerable volume of patients is treated in FTX, enabling the main ED to concentrate on more complex, higher-acuity cases.

Challenges related to operating an additional clinical space one floor away are mainly related to transport, but patients can be discharged directly from FTX on most days

Outcomes

The clinic is so successful that the ED team recently identified another physical space for fast track to be used during the day in the hospital's Sleep Lab, as contingency plan during high volume surges. Also, during recent winter volume surges, pre-operative (pre-op) nursing administrators have been flexible and willing to facilitate a hybrid ED-pre-op patient space during weekday early afternoon hours.

Tool for this project:

- Boston Children's Hospital Fast Track Triage Guidelines