

Warm handoffs

Elements of a warm handoff

Transitions in care can often be the points where care can be interrupted, lost or fragmented. During transitions, people may be at risk of experiencing more mental or emotional stress due to extra challenges, changes and disruption.

A warm handoff helps to reduce or eliminate these issues and can give the person an additional level of comfort and trust in the new provider or service. It also prevents the person from having to tell their stories to the new provider all over again.

A warm handoff should include:

- Introducing the person to the new provider or service directly (face-to-face or by phone).
- Including the person and their family in the communication between service providers and allow them to hear what is said.
- Providing the person with the opportunity to clarify or correct information and ask questions about their care.



Role of navigator

A navigator is a person or role within the healthcare system who support seamless transitions across the continuum of care and assist individuals and families to access services as needed.

The navigator usually has an enormous influence on how the individuals will perceive and respond to the new services and care. They can be part of a warm handoff to guide people and their families and ensure seamless transitions.

More than a referral

A warm handoff is more than sending a referral. Here are some tips to make it more successful:

- Meet face to face with the referral agency and the person and their family.
- Invite the person to meet at the new office next appointment.
- Develop a collaborative relationship with internal and external community partners.
- Call the referral agency and discuss the referral before sending the referral package.
- Continue to support the person until their initial visit with the referral agency.

With a warm handoff, the care provider directly introduces the person to the new providers at the time of their first visit to the new service. The warm handoff establishes an initial face-to-face contact between the person and the new care provider and confers the trust and rapport the individual has developed with the previous provider to the new one.