

a VITAL WorkLife article

# Do Physician Interventions Work? A Resounding YES!

*Data Shows the Immense Positive Impact of a Physician Intervention*



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## In the article:

- What is a Physician Intervention?
- Pre- and post-intervention survey data from the organizational perspective
- Pre- and post-intervention survey data from the physician perspective
- Final thoughts: What does the data mean?

Have you ever had a distressed physician with communication challenges or a practice style that puts everyone on the care team on edge, or causes them to be concerned? Or worse yet, has patients complaining?

These behaviors impact interpersonal and care team relationships, patient satisfaction, retention and can even lead to medical errors. Often times when this type of serious behavior occurs, the physician is referred to VITAL WorkLife to participate in our Physician Intervention program.

## What is a Physician Intervention?

Physician Intervention cases are referrals from an organizational leader concerned about managing a distressed physician. A case typically lasts one year with the physician first going through an assessment with a consulting physician and licensed behavioral health consultant. We use a four-phase approach for a Physician Intervention:

- Initial organization consultation
- Physician assessment
- Case management
- Final organization consultation



The goal of this process is to help the organization retain a valued physician by effectively addressing the physician behaviors, underlying contributing factors and organization practices that can impact the physician's ability to sustain change. It's not typically voluntary for the physician and there is often initial push back, but the results are almost always positive for both the organization and physician.

As part of this process, assessment findings and recommendations are shared with the organization and referred physician. We continue working with both to facilitate and manage the recommendations moving forward. Since 2016, we have been collecting survey results about our Physician Intervention program from both the referring organization and physicians themselves. Surveys are conducted both before and after the case is closed and are completely voluntary.

## **PART ONE: The Organization's Perspective**

### ***Will referring a physician to an intervention solve your problems? Survey results from those who've done so.***

The information below highlights the leadership perspective of the Physician Intervention process and results.

#### **The Results: Organizational Perspective**

The organizational survey focuses on the impact the intervention has on quality of care and management of the business.

#### **Physician Intervention Results**

Results from the pre- and post-surveys highlight multiple initial concerns and are contrasted with the post intervention status.

***On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being very dissatisfied), how satisfied are you with the following?***

<i>Issue/Concern (scored 8 or higher)</i>	<i>Pre-Intervention</i>	<i>Post-Intervention</i>	<i>Difference</i>
<i>Patient Satisfaction Rating</i>	<i>35.7%</i>	<i>55.5%</i>	<i>+19.8%</i>
<i>Attendance</i>	<i>57.1%</i>	<i>88.9%</i>	<i>+31.8%</i>
<i>Time dealing with issues</i>	<i>14.3%</i>	<i>64.7%</i>	<i>+50.4%</i>
<i>Adherence to schedule</i>	<i>50.0%</i>	<i>72.2%</i>	<i>+22.2%</i>
<i>Completion of admin tasks</i>	<i>50.0%</i>	<i>77.8%</i>	<i>+27.8%</i>
<i>Performance issues</i>	<i>17.9%</i>	<i>64.7%</i>	<i>+46.8%</i>





Additionally, organizations that would consider the participating physician for a leadership role went from 14% to 33% after they had completed the intervention.

### Complaints against the referred physician

Pre and post intervention results for complaints against the referred physician reflect dramatic improvements (reductions) from respondents. Although numbers for this set of questions is relatively low, what is interesting is the variety of groups who have submitted complaints against a physician. Complaints against anyone in any workplace are an indicator that something is wrong and will likely affect employee turnover, productivity and patient satisfaction. As a leader, it is recommended you continuously monitor for complaints and be proactive in addressing the situation.

### Complaints post-intervention

Type of Complaint	% Decrease
Patient Complaints	-41.1%
Nurse Complaints	-78.7%
Staff Complaints	-47.9%
Other Physician Complaints	-64.2%

### Resolution & Overall Satisfaction with VITAL WorkLife:

The results of the post-intervention survey included questions about the process and results. Overall, the results are positive and indicate the Physician Intervention is helpful. Specifically, two interesting details to note. First, troubled physicians can cause increased turnover in nurses, other physicians and administration staff. Second, organizations who did not follow recommendations (11%) to help the physicians correlated closely with the organizations who said the primary issues was not resolved (also at 11%). Here are some additional findings from the post-intervention survey:

- 94% of the physicians that went through the program continue to work at the organization
- 95% of organizations felt VITAL WorkLife was helpful in addressing their issue/concern
- 18% improvement in turnover rates among nurses, physicians and administration
- 89% of organizations felt the primary issue was resolved (11% did not)
- 89% of organizations followed the program recommendations to help the physician (11% did not)
- 94% overall satisfaction and would recommend VITAL WorkLife to others



### Why VITAL WorkLife?

- Over 10 years of working directly with physicians and healthcare organizations delivering Physician Intervention programs
- Experience managing extensive Physician Intervention cases with numerous healthcare clients nationwide
- Our clinical leads average over 20 years of experience working with medical professionals
- We work closely with the organization and physician for up to a year, offering support and accountability for sustainable behavior change

## PART TWO: The Physician's Perspective

Not surprisingly, the physician involved in the intervention and the individual or group who made the referral have different opinions and experiences. Below we will review the intake (pre) and follow-up (post) survey data from the physicians.

### The Results: Physician Perspective

#### ***What is your understanding of why you were referred into our program?***

- 79% Disruptive communication or behavior
- 11% Behavioral health and well being
- 5% Personal loss or other life stressors
- 5% Patient care or safety concerns

#### ***What are your goals or desired outcomes for our program?***

- 68% Improved relationships
- 47% Assistance with stress or anger management
- 32% Improved job satisfaction
- 26% Compliance with organization expectations
- 21% Better work/life balance
- 16% Better practice management
- 11% Increased patient satisfaction
- 5% Increased levels of energy or efficiency

As you can see from the responses above, most often the physicians have a clear understanding why they have been referred to the program and have desired outcomes to solve those issues.

### Perceived Stress/Burnout Level

#### ***Levels of stress at the practice has increased in the last two years***

- 84% agreed or strongly agreed

#### ***Top 3 external factors causing stress***

- 40% Nothing in the external environment
- 36% Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) policies



Is there a physician at your organization who might need an intervention? Schedule a **30-minute consultation** with us to discuss in more detail.

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**95%** of organizations felt VITAL WorkLife was helpful in addressing their issue/concern.

24% Healthcare reform

#### **Top 3 work-related factors causing stress**

44% EHR and administrative demands

40% Conflict with co-workers

40% Organizational change or uncertainty

#### **Top 3 personal factors causing stress**

36% Not enough time for exercise or well being activities

34% Not enough time to relax and/or sleep

30% Concerns about work/life balance in general

However, as seen below, the things physicians ask to reduce stress focus solely on the work area of their lives, and not on personal factors.

#### **Top 3 things requested to reduce feelings of stress and burnout**

57% Improved work environment

33% Greater support by administration

33% More control over work and the way it is done

#### **Physician Intervention Results**

##### **Personal Life:**

**On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being very dissatisfied), how satisfied are you with your personal life?**

Between the intake (pre) and follow-up (post) survey, physicians reported a 3.5% increase in satisfaction with their personal life.

##### **Professional Life and Work/Life Balance:**

**On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being very dissatisfied), how satisfied are you with your professional life?**

Between the intake and follow-up survey, physicians reported a 20% increase in satisfaction with their professional life and about a 15%



## ABOUT VITAL WORKLIFE

VITAL WorkLife, Inc. is a physician-focused national behavioral health consulting practice supporting all dimensions of well being in the workplace with a multitude of solutions. Serving the U.S. healthcare industry since 2007, our national team of certified physician peer coaches and senior behavioral health consultants deliver life-changing well being solutions.

increase in satisfaction with their work-life balance.

### Resolution & Overall Satisfaction with VITAL WorkLife:

- 88% of physicians felt the primary issue was resolved or improved
- 84% of physicians felt that VITAL WorkLife was helpful in addressing their issue/concern
- 88% of physicians said they followed the program recommendations
- 92% overall satisfaction
- 80% would recommend VITAL WorkLife for other struggling physicians

From this we can conclude that when the recommendations are followed (88% of physicians said they followed program recommendations) results will be positive, and the physician's primary desired outcome (such as improved relationships, stress and anger management, improved work satisfaction, work/life balance, etc.) can be achieved.



## Final Note

Overall, we see the survey results from both the physician and organizational perspective as overwhelmingly positive. This indicates numerous positive outcomes from the intervention: A more satisfied administration, a retained physician, happier staff and most importantly, a physician who has made sustainable behavior change and is on the course to well being.

*For more information about our Physician Intervention solution or our other unique solutions to support physician well being, set up a 30 minute consultation with us [here](#).*