THE PROVIDER 360 PROGRAM

A3 8-STEP PROBLEM-SOLVING

An **A3** is a simple, one-page tool that helps teams work through a problem from start to finish. It guides you to understand the problem, find the root cause, choose the best fixes, follow up to make sure the improvement lasts, and standardize the process. Use an A3 when you have a complex or repeating problem that needs data, clear thinking, and a structured plan. It works well for process issues, cross-team problems, and situations where decisions should be based on root causes and facts.

Instructions:

Step 1: Clarify the Problem: Explain what the issue is and why it matters to the work or goals. Keep it short, factual, and well-defined.

Example: We found that provider documents were often missing during case review, slowing down work and causing rework. This prevents us from receiving timely payment.

Step 2: Break Down the Problem: Describe what is happening today using data and observations. Show when, where, and how the issue happens, and the gap between current and desired performance.

Example: In the last 30 days, 42% of cases were missing documents. This required staff to go back to the provider to obtain the missing information. There is no consistent process for building relationships in getting necessary documentation.

Step 3: Set Improvement Target: Set a clear, SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goal describing what you want to achieve and how success will be measured.

Example: Reduce missing documentation from 42% to under 10% in 60 days. Track progress weekly using the documentation report.

Step 4: Determine Root Cause: Identify the real reasons the problem occurs. Use tools like 5 Whys or Fishbone to confirm true root causes, not symptoms.

Example: The 5 Whys showed documents were missing because provider requests were inconsistent. Each staff member contacted providers differently, and no standard process existed.

Step 5: Develop Countermeasures: List possible solutions that directly address the root cause. Review each option's impact, cost, timing, and effect on workflow. Choose the best ones.

Example: Options included a standard request template, automated reminders, and a single contact for high-volume providers. The team chose the template and reminders as the most effective and realistic.

Step 6: See Countermeasures Through: Communicate the action plan—what will be done, by whom, and by when. Make sure everyone understands the steps and track progress to completion.

Example: The team shared the plan, assigned responsibilities, and explained how the new request template will be used. Progress is tracked in the action plan.

Step 7: Confirm Results & Process: Check whether the changes are working. Compare the results to the targets and adjust if needed. Share outcomes with stakeholders.

Example: After launch, missing documentation dropped to 12%. The team reviewed results and adjusted reminder timing to improve further.

Step 8: Standardize & Share Process: Document the new process so it becomes the standard way of working. Communicate broadly and ensure everyone understands and follows the updated standard procedure.

Example: The new provider request process was added to the workflow guide and shared with all team members, and staff were trained to ensure consistent use.

A3 8-Step

Problem Solving Template

1. Clarify the Problem

2. Break Down the Problem

3. Set Improvement Target

4. Determine Root Cause

5. Develop Countermeasures

6. See Countermeasures Through

7. Confirm Results & Process

8. Standardize & Share Process

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