

One Team, One Call: Transforming Outpatient Pharmacy Communication

Dahlia Sultan, PharmD, CSP

Assistant Director, Ambulatory Clinical Pharmacy Services
University of Chicago Medicine

Horieh Pourmandi, PharmD

Pharmacy Operations Coordinator, UCMC Pharmacy Call Center,
University of Chicago Medicine

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Disclosure

- The speakers have no conflicts of interest with ineligible companies to disclose.



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Learning Objectives:

- Describe the purpose and structure of a centralized pharmacy call center across Retail, Mail and Specialty pharmacy services
- Outline the roles and responsibilities performed by centralized pharmacy call center staff
- Identify key operational metrics used to evaluate centralized pharmacy call center performance



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Assessment

Current State:

- How are calls handled today by each call center?
 - Call volumes, locations/teams receiving calls, workflows, pain points, transfers, wait times, abandonment rates, and variation between departments

Future-State Scope:

- Which services and call types should be centralized?
- Which work should remain with the individual departments?



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Analysis



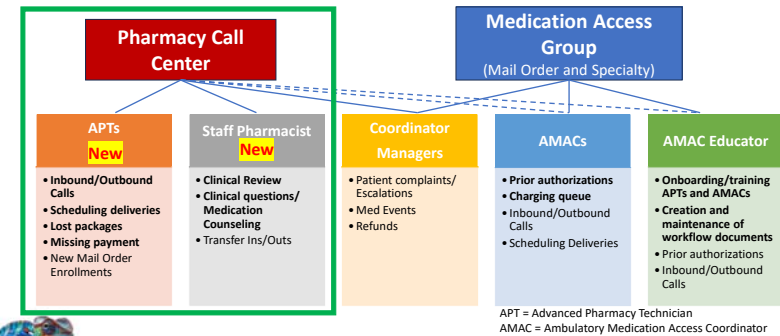
Goals of the Pharmacy Call Center:

- Improve patient experience
- Create efficiencies
- Increase team engagement
- Optimize roles
- Create Flexible workforce
- Support pharmacy growth

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Staffing and Roles



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Call Routing and Queue Management

Call Queues: A virtual waiting line that organizes incoming calls based on the type of service or assistance needed. Calls remain in the queue until an appropriate agent is available to handle them.

- **Call Queues**
 - Mail
 - Retail
 - Specialty

- **Dequeued:** Call goes to voicemail after specified time if no agents are available

- **Call Back Queue(New):** If calls are not handled within specified time, patient is given the option to receive a call back when an agent is available

Skill: A capability or qualification assigned to an agent that identifies the types of calls they are trained and authorized to handle. Skills can be used to route calls to the most appropriate available agent.

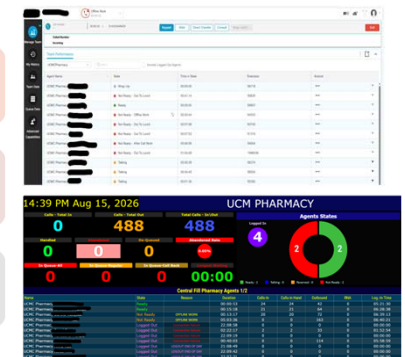
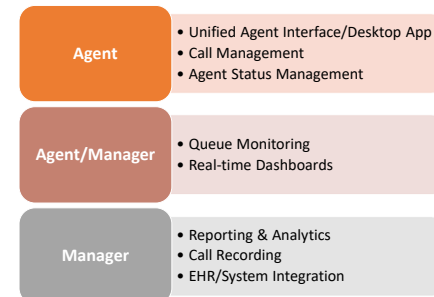
- **Dedicated Skills:** Agents are assigned only to their primary area (AMAC)
- **Cross-Skilled Agents:** Agents are trained to support multiple queues (APTs)
- **Primary + Secondary Skills:** Agents have a primary queue but can support another when needed

Multiple queues can be supported by a shared pool of agents with different skill assignments, allowing staffing resources to be used more flexibly.

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Technology Capabilities



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Self-Assessment Question 1

Which statement best describes how skills are used in a call center environment?

- A. Skills are use to store voicemails until an agent becomes available
- B. Skills identify the types of calls an agent is trained and authorized to handle, helping route calls to the most appropriate available agent
- C. Skills automatically place callers into the same queue regardless of their needs
- D. Skills determine how long a caller must wait before being connected to an agent



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Standardized Workflows

SOP Development

- Workflow documents for respective areas
- Standard scripts and communication
- Defined escalation pathways
- Consistent documentation
- Call dispositioning

Training and Competency

- Development of competency checklist
- Continuous improvement



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Performance and Reporting



Measure

- Call Queue Performance
- Agent Performance



Monitor

- Patient/Service Experience



Evaluate

- Operational & Strategic Reporting



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Call Queue Performance

Call Presented: Calls that are sent to the agent, regardless of whether the agent picks up the call

Calls Handled: Number of Calls handled by this CSQ (each call center). A call is handled if a caller is connected to an agent while queued for this CSQ

Speed of Answer: Average answer speed = Total queue time / Calls handled

Calls Abandoned: Number of calls that routed to CSQ (each call center) but are not answered by an agent because the caller hung up or disconnected

Abandonment Rate: Percentage of calls that were abandoned

$$(\text{Number of calls abandoned} / \text{Number of calls presented}) / 100\%$$

Calls Dequeued: Number of calls that are queued for CSQ and then dequeued by the Dequeue step in a workflow



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Agent Performance

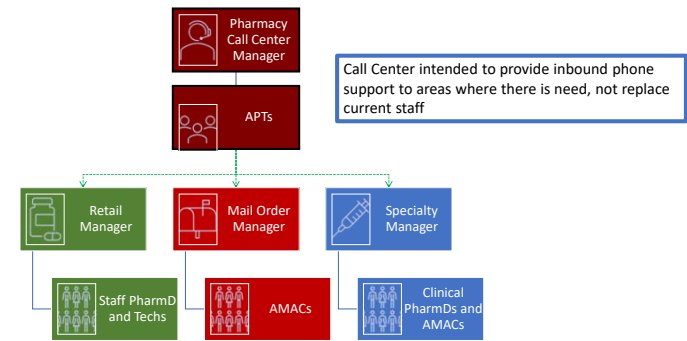
- **Handle Time:** Handle time = Talk time + Hold Time + work time (After Call Work – Not ready)
- **Hold Time:** Time that the agent puts the calls on hold



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Operational Oversight & Continuous Improvement



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Self-Assessment Question 2

A call is routed to a Call Queue, waits in line, but the caller hangs up before speaking with an agent. How is this call classified?

- Calls Presented
- Calls Handled
- Calls Abandoned
- Calls Dequeued



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Outpatient Pharmacy Services

Hours of Operations:

	Mail Order	Retail	Specialty	Call Center
Mon-Fri	8 AM-5:30 PM	7 AM-7 PM	8 AM-5:30 PM	8 AM-5:30 PM
Saturday	--	7 AM-3 PM	--	--

Daily Volume:

	Mail Order	Retail	Specialty
Prescriptions	650	900	200
Phone Calls	300	375	175

**Data is from Aug 2024-Jan 2025



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Baseline Operational Metrics by Call Center

Call Center Metric (Avg 6 months)	Goal	Mail Order	Retail	Specialty
Calls Presented		6,500	8,500	3,400
Calls Handled		6,400	7,500	3,100
Abandonment Rate	<5%	1.8%	9.2%	3.4%
Time to Abandon		1:07	2:39	1:08
Calls Dequeued	<2%	0.4%	2.2%	3.7%
Time to Dequeued		2:35	3:15	1:02
Speed of Answer	<30 sec	0:17	1:13	0:23
Handle Time		3:12	2:09	3:59

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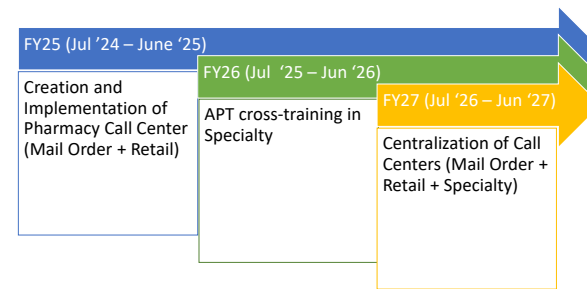


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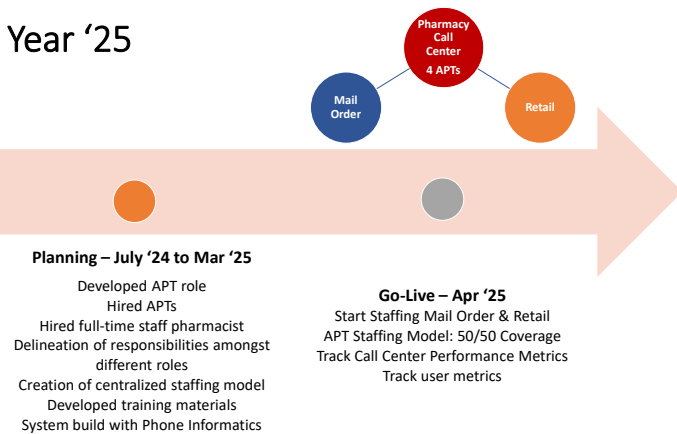
Pharmacy Call Center Timeline



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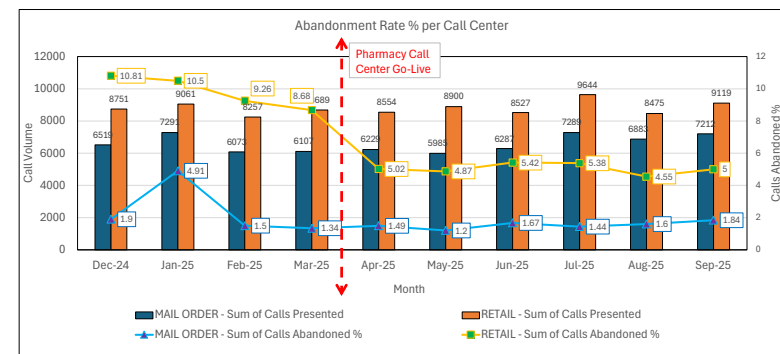
Fiscal Year '25



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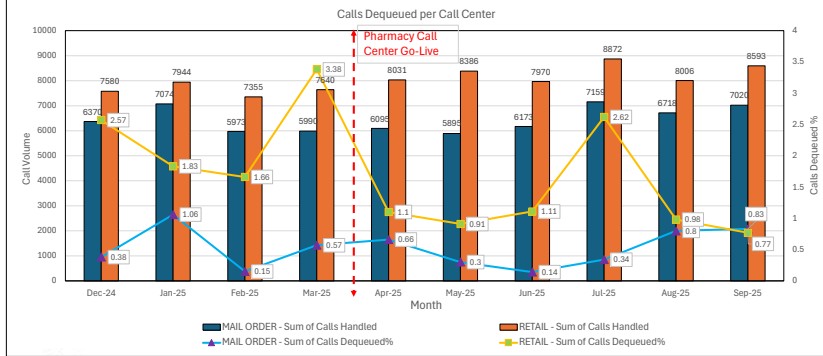
Abandonment Rate %



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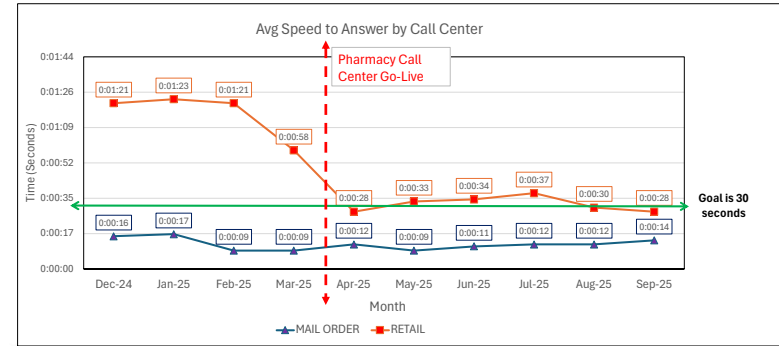
Calls Dequeued %



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Average Speed to Answer



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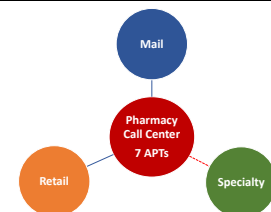
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Fiscal Year '26

Planning – May '25 to Sept '25

Cross-Trained APT in Specialty
Delineation of Responsibilities
Developed training materials
Assessing specialty call metrics



Go-Live – Oct '25

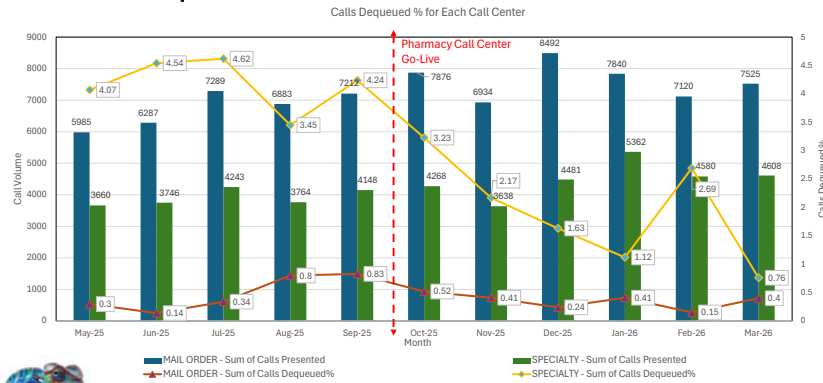
Start staffing specialty call center
Decompressing specialty pharmacy team
phone coverages
Track and trend metrics



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Calls Dequeued %



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Impact of Pharmacy Call Center

Direct:

- Measure impact of APTs on individual call centers

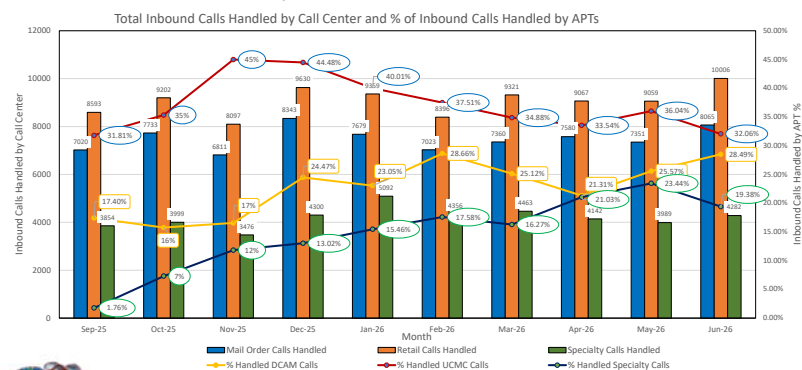
Indirect:

- Impact on other roles
 - AMACs – increase in medication access support
 - Clinical Pharmacists – increase in patient care activities

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Calls Handled by Call Center APTs



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Self-Assessment Question 3

Which of the following is NOT identified a key component of centralized call center?

- Staffing & Roles
- Standardized Workflows
- Call Routing & Queue Management
- Inventory Management

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Continuous Improvement – Fiscal Year '27

Training:

- Continue cross-training current APTs on specialty pharmacy workflows
- Integrate specialty pharmacy into the centralized call center model

Workload:

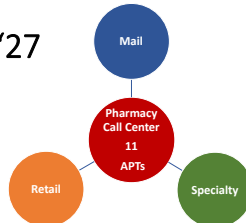
- Assess workload and staffing capacity across each operational area
- Shift responsibilities as needed based on workload and area-specific needs

Performance & Patient Experience:

- Monitor employee performance and productivity
- Evaluate patient experience and service quality

Reporting:

- Measure operational efficiency and scalability
- Establish monthly reporting to track quality, productivity, and outcomes



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Lessons Learned

- Training timelines vary by operational area
 - Specialty pharmacy training may require up to six weeks
- Staff turnover creates ongoing training and coverage challenges
- Collaboration with the hospital call center is needed to align workflows and best practices
- Standardization should allow flexibility for area-specific needs and workflows



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