

SIGN RESEARCH FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WAYFINDING MANAGEMENT: MODELS & METHODS IN HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENTS



HEALTHCARE CAN BE OVERWHELMING—as can the facilities which provide that care. In this setting, patients and their loved ones need clear and effective signage to help them find their way without causing additional stress.

“Wayfinding Management: Models & Methods in Healthcare Environments,” a 2018 report from the Sign Research Foundation, presents seven examples of best practices in healthcare wayfinding. It was written by Leslie Wolke, founder of MapWell Studio. Wolke consults with healthcare institutions and design firms on wayfinding technology and strategy.

Though the case studies involved focus on the people, processes and tools of some of the leading large medical facilities nationwide, the ideas represented easily could be applied to any complex facility that relies on efficiently navigating visitors.

“These protocols focus on operational and organizational systems that support a permanent commitment to making it as easy as possible for visitors to navigate these massive and overwhelming facilities.”

Seven examples of best practices:

- 1** Cincinnati Children’s Hospital regularly uses tools such as visitor surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of wayfinding methods and improve the visitor experience.
- 2** Cleveland Clinic has developed and updated a formalized system of Sign Standards. The Signage Department is entrusted to manage projects; collaboration takes place early on in large-scale initiatives; and consistent adherence is ensured through investment in in-house capabilities.
- 3** MD Anderson Cancer Center launched an integrated suite of wayfinding tools including pocket maps, digital applications, architectural landmarks and more.
- 4** New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center evangelizes the positive impact of improved wayfinding tools, as well as educates staff members on how to give directions using the institution’s wayfinding logic and vocabulary.
- 5** Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center has three permanent cross-department committees overseeing consistency and compliance: the Sign Committee, the Wayfinding Committee and the Campus Maps Team. The committees address wayfinding challenges as they arise on the more than 550-acre campus.
- 6** UCSF Health employs a wayfinding manager to oversee all aspects of the institution’s wayfinding system; that person also coordinates with those involved in renovations and expansions.
- 7** University of Chicago Medicine closely documents and tracks all aspects of its sign system to gain efficiencies and help maintain accuracy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CLEARLY DEFINE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure wayfinding practices and oversight don't fall through the cracks by appointing a wayfinding manager and/or a permanent wayfinding committee.
- When establishing a wayfinding committee, innovative medical centers may include participants from a variety of disciplines such as interior design, IT, executive administration, facilities, patient-facing departments, marketing and others.
- The wayfinding manager may need multiple skills including graphic design, wayfinding acumen, and project management. The person may work with an internal sign shop, or contract with outside vendors and installers.
- Consider creating a centralized resource, such as the system at UCSF Health, where maps are uploaded to the Document, Media, & Mail Department and used by all staff to order printed materials.
- Evaluate and appropriately staff wayfinding teams, such as MD Anderson, who grew their internal wayfinding department from two employees in 2005 to ten in 2017, as well as adding an in-house sign shop.

WAYFINDING AND SIGN MANAGEMENT TOOLS

- 1** Wayfinding management software simplifies the planning, design, implementation and maintenance of complex sign systems.
- 2** Sign locations and messages can be added to Autodesk AutoCAD floor plans, AutoDesk Revit models and PlanGrid documents.

SET THE STANDARD, AND THEN SPREAD THE WORD

- A formalized and current system of Sign Standards helps ensure consistency in presentation and harmony with the organization's overall brand.
- In some cases, Sign Standards are rolled out through campus-wide initiatives; in other instances, they are implemented during larger construction projects, updating one part of the campus at a time. A third option is to begin with re-signing visitor walkways and public areas.
- In order to convey how a wayfinding system improves patient experience, New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Irving Medical Center's Visitor Information Services Department collaborated with Human Resources to market the wayfinding system to department chairs campus-wide.
- UCSF Health includes a wayfinding training module in its employee orientation program.
- University of Chicago Medical Center employs a suite of software and services to manage signs. The process has included auditing the campus, photographing all signs, and structuring the database for ease in searching signs, sign types and messages. The live sign inventory also allows for more accurate budgeting, efficient updates and other benefits.

ENGAGE AND LEARN FROM VISITORS

- Regular visitor surveys at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center are incorporated into a larger analysis: Is the hospital achieving its experiential goals?
- MD Anderson piloted an indoor wayfinding app and invited members of their Patient and Advisory group to try it before a larger roll-out.
- UCSF used input from visitors to streamline its wayfinding touchscreens; those visitors were asked to "click" through paper prototypes.
- MD Anderson launched its own app in 2013, including the ability to generate custom directions to any campus destination.
- All new employees at Cleveland Clinic are trained in how to greet and help patients and visitors.

3 Custom fields and functions to manage signage can be created within ARCHIBUS Web Central or ServiceNow.

5 A departmental database can be created to manage annotated location plans, signs and destination names.

4 Facilities and asset management systems that track inventory can also track signs.

6 A spreadsheet of official destination names can streamline the process of keeping all names consistent across media.

Read the Full Report at
signresearch.org/healthcarewayfinding

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