



Delay – The Third Next Available Appointment

The delay or wait time for an appointment reflects the gap or time lapse between when the demand for the appointment is declared, and when the resource or the supply by the provider is available. We commonly refer to this as delay.

The most basic measure of delay is the **number of calendar days to the third next available appointment (TNA)**. The TNA appointment is used — rather than the first or second — because it is a better reflection of system availability since the first or second next available appointment may be available due to a cancellation or some other event (*i.e.* uncontrollable variability).

It is important that this measure be an indicator of when an appointment is available by easy, barrier-free means, not by begging/manipulating for an earlier appointment. It is simply the TNA appointment offered by the scheduling system as the scheduling system is set up today. As the team tests strategies and simplifies the scheduling system, the TNA appointment will reflect these changes.

TNA appointment can be tracked as follows:

- **For Primary Care** - by “Short” or “Long” appointment. There are no set definitions for each of these appointment types – it is up to each clinic to determine what a short appointment is and what a long appointment is.

Measuring Third Next Available Appointment

To find the TNA appointment for a specific appointment type, count the number of calendar days from a selected data collection day to the day when the third next appointment of the same type is available.

(Note: This includes Saturdays and Sundays even if the clinic is not open on weekends.)
Collect this data on the same day at the same time each week for each provider.

Tips

It is helpful to collect the measures even when the clinic/program is experiencing unusual circumstances. Having the data for every week, no matter what the circumstances, will help show the results of events such as holidays and also the results of improvement such as contingency plans during peak periods.

It is helpful to have an alternate person for taking measurements so that the data can be collected consistently, even when the usual data collection person is not available.





Example – Collecting TNA for a “Short” appointment

Dr. Jane’s schedule

	Monday 5-Nov-07	Tuesday 6-Nov-07	Wednesday 7-Nov-07	Thursday 8-Nov-07	Friday 9-Nov-07	Saturday 10-Nov-07	Sunday 11-Nov-07	Monday 12-Nov-07
0900-0910	BP check	Shrt of breath	BP check	BP check	BP check	closed	closed	BP check
0910-0920	Prenatal	Remove Wart	Prenatal	Prenatal	Not booked			Prenatal
0920-0930		Asthma			Meeting			
0930-0940	Well baby	Not booked	Well baby	Not booked	Flu			Not booked
0940-0950	Sore toe	#2 Prenatal	Sore toe	Sore toe	Sore toe			Sore toe
0950-1000	Nursing home discussion	Well baby	Nursing home discussion	Nursing home discussion	Nursing home discussion			Physical
1000-1010		Ear syringe						
1010-1020	Dressing	Dressing	Dressing	Dressing	Dressing			Dressing
1020-1030	Sore eye	Sore eye	Sore eye	Sore eye	Sore eye			Sore toe
1030-1040	Flu	Flu	Flu	Flu	Flu			Flu
1040-1050	Diabetes	Diabetes	Diabetes	Diabetes	Sore Knee			Diabetes
1050-1100	Back pain	Back pain	Back pain	Back pain	Back pain			Back pain

A “Short” appointment for Dr. Jane is defined as a 10 minute slot.

Jerry does the count on **Tuesday at 10 a.m.:**

- 1st next available appointment: Thursday at 9:30 am
- 2nd next available appointment: Friday at 9:10 am
- 3rd next available appointment: Monday at 9:30 am

Third next available appointment = 12 (Nov 12) minus 6 (Nov 6 count day) = **6 days**

Jerry would record “6” days for a short appointment for Dr. Jane for the week of November 5:

