HealthTeamWorks®

Third Next Available Appointment: A Reference Guide

> **Third Next Available Appointment defined: The average length of time in days between the day a patient makes a request for an appointment (i.e., new patient physical, routine exam, or return visit exam) with a physician and the third next available appointment.** ~*Institute for Healthcare Improvement*

Access is a measure of the patient's ability to seek and receive care with the provider of their choice, at the time they choose, regardless of the reason for their visit. Counting the **"Third Next Available Appointment"** (3NAA) is the healthcare industry's standard measure of access to care and indicates how long a patient waits to be seen. This measure is used to assess the average number of days to the third next available appointment for an office visit* for each clinic and/or department. This measure does not differentiate between "new" and "established" patients."

In other words, determining the **3NAA** is the industry standard for measuring appointment access in your practice. In contrast to first and second available appointments (often the result of last-minute cancellations, working patients into the schedule, or other events), the **3NAA** best represents the performance of the appointment access system as a whole. This measure shows the percent of divisions with a wait time that is 10 days or less.

HOW TO CALCULATE THIRD NEXT AVAILABLE APPOINTMENT (3NAA)

• Select **one team member** with access to the scheduling system to run the 3NAA measure.

• To determine the 3NAA, **look at the schedule** and ask: *"As of right now, what is the third next available appointment for this provider?"*

• As you start out, the 3NAA should be **measured once a week, on the same day and time of day for all providers** to get an accurate picture of access and of your practice's progress as you work to reduce the days between your *current* 3NAA and an *ideal* 3NAA. This more frequent measure gives you the information you need to assess the impact on the backlog of the changes you are making. Once the 3NAA has become stable at the targeted zero to one days, it can be monitored monthly.

• **A simple rule:** *Count all calendar days including days off, weekends, holidays, and even days when provider is unavailable (administrative time, operating time, etc.) as it makes it easier to compare patient wait time across providers and, most importantly, throughout the practice.* If 3NAA is today, then the value is zero (0). *This makes 3NAA a patient-focused measure.*

• **Determine 3NAA for new visits and return visits separately for each provider.** You can determine 3NAA for other visit types if they make up a large proportion of the visits in your system.

• For open "Any type of visit" appointments or for appointments that are held for use on a particular day (e.g., all procedures are scheduled at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays), **do not count these towards your 3NAA.** This includes appointments held for same-day appointments or those that might be held for urgent care or walk-in patients.

Remember: Do not count slots for same-day appointments, urgent, or walk-ins towards 3NAA, since they are "blocked" off the calendar.

• However, y**ou can count any appointment that is being held for a same-day visit *on the day you take the measure.*** Note: Count this appointment only once and only for the appointment type (e.g., new, routine, return) for which it is being held.

THIRD NEXT AVAILABLE APPOINTMENT WORKSHEET

How to Record 3NAA

• You can use a worksheet like the one below to list the providers in your practice and then record the date the 3NAA measure is taken. Write the date of the third next available appointment in the second column and then record the number of days to the third appointment in the last column. You can cluster providers by clinic within your health center and for providers at other sites within your network.

• Note the date of the 3NAA. Record the number of days from today to the 3NAA. Today is day zero; tomorrow is day one, and so forth. For example, if there are three appointments available today, the 3NAA is zero. If the third next available is tomorrow, the 3NAA is one; the day after that the 3NAA is two, etc.

• Complete this for new visits and return visits for each provider, if you use both types of visits.

3NAA WORKSHEET		
Name of Health Center: **Visit Type:**		**3NAA Measure Date**
Name of Provider and Clinic	**Date of 3rd Next Available Appointment**	**Number of days from today until that day**
1. Sample 1: Dr. Marilee Dempsey, Main Street Clinic Sample 2: Dr. Shelli Kessler, First Street Family Practice	Feb. 22 Feb. 20	6 4 Average: 5 days til 3NAA
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		