

Receptionists in Healthcare 101



**Receptionists
influence patient
health outcomes.**





Patient
engagement



Activation



Adherence

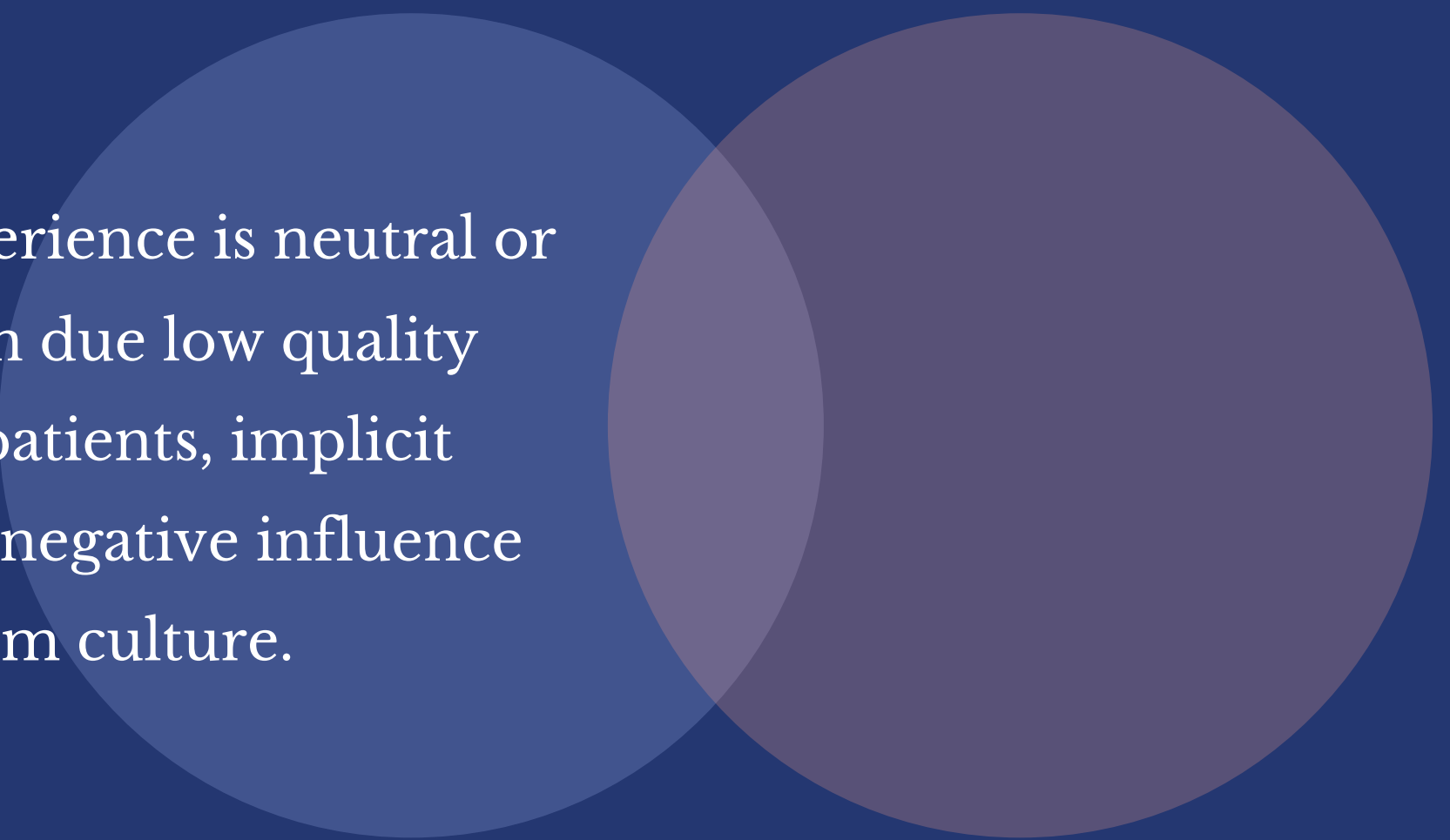
these **primary drivers** of health outcomes,
are significantly impacted by receptionists.



Receptionists are the
first impression of the organization

Receptionists have an outsized role in patient experience: when it is **positive**, it is through the establishment of empathic relationships, & their influence on the look & feel of the waiting room.





When patient experience is neutral or **negative**, it is often due low quality interactions with patients, implicit negative bias, and negative influence on the waiting room culture.

Reception tasks are sometimes
framed as repetitive & menial



An underwater photograph showing a large, swirling vortex of blue water. The water is clear and bright blue, with white foam and bubbles visible at the center of the vortex. The perspective is from above, looking down into the water. The text "However, research indicates..." is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

**However,
research
indicates...**



Receptionists engage consistently in individual **discernment, discretion and decision making** about a host of deeply important patient care matters such as....

Urgency of Appointments



Timing of medication
refill requests



Which patient inquiries to
share with providers





Despite their pivotal
importance in healthcare...
Receptionists are **often ignored**
at best, & **mistreated** at worst

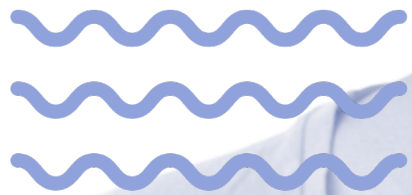


This is a social
justice issue





Receptionists are overwhelmingly women (90%) & in many parts of the US, women of color.



They are **low-wage** workers, often with rigid work schedules, & little autonomy.

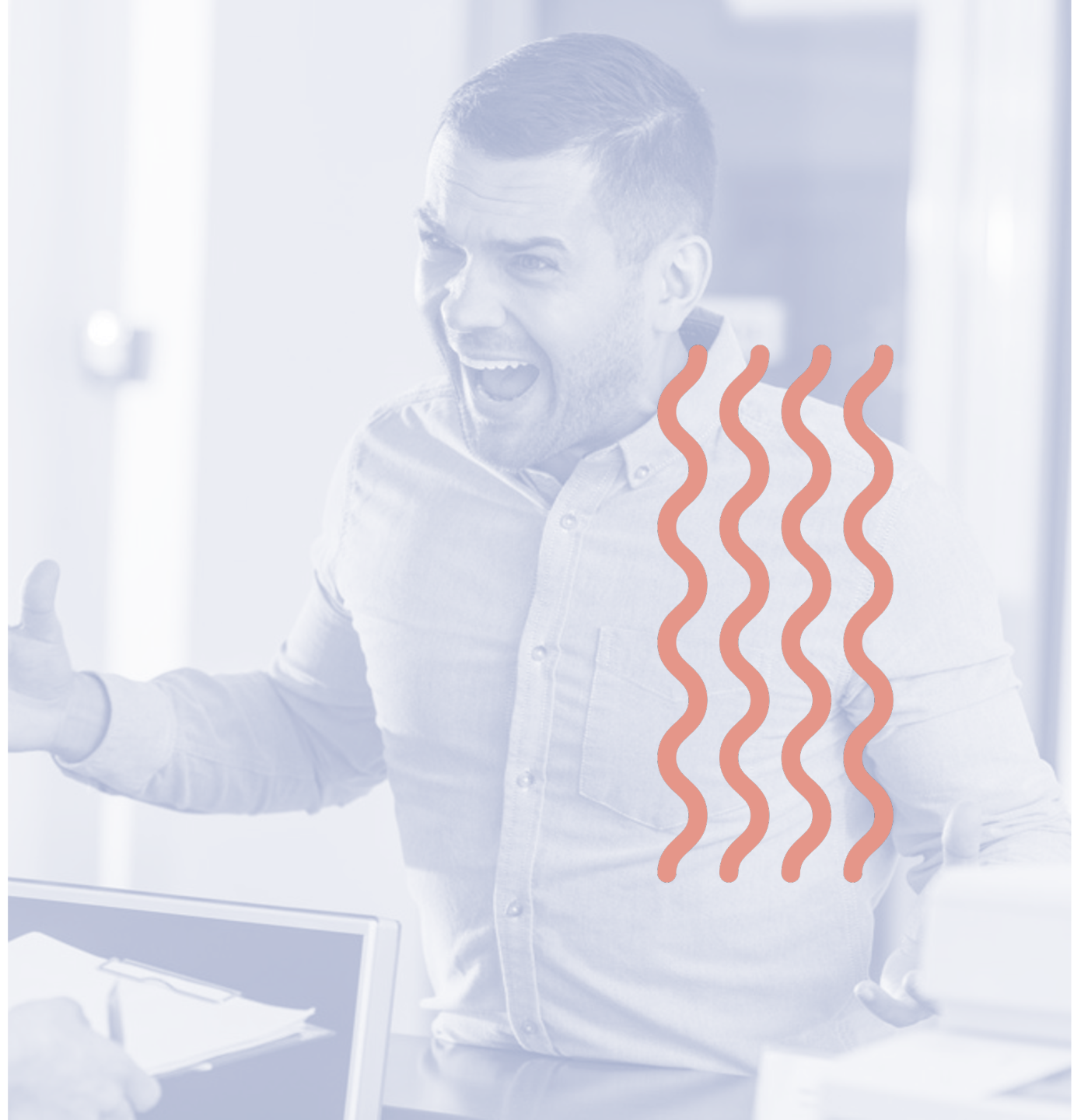


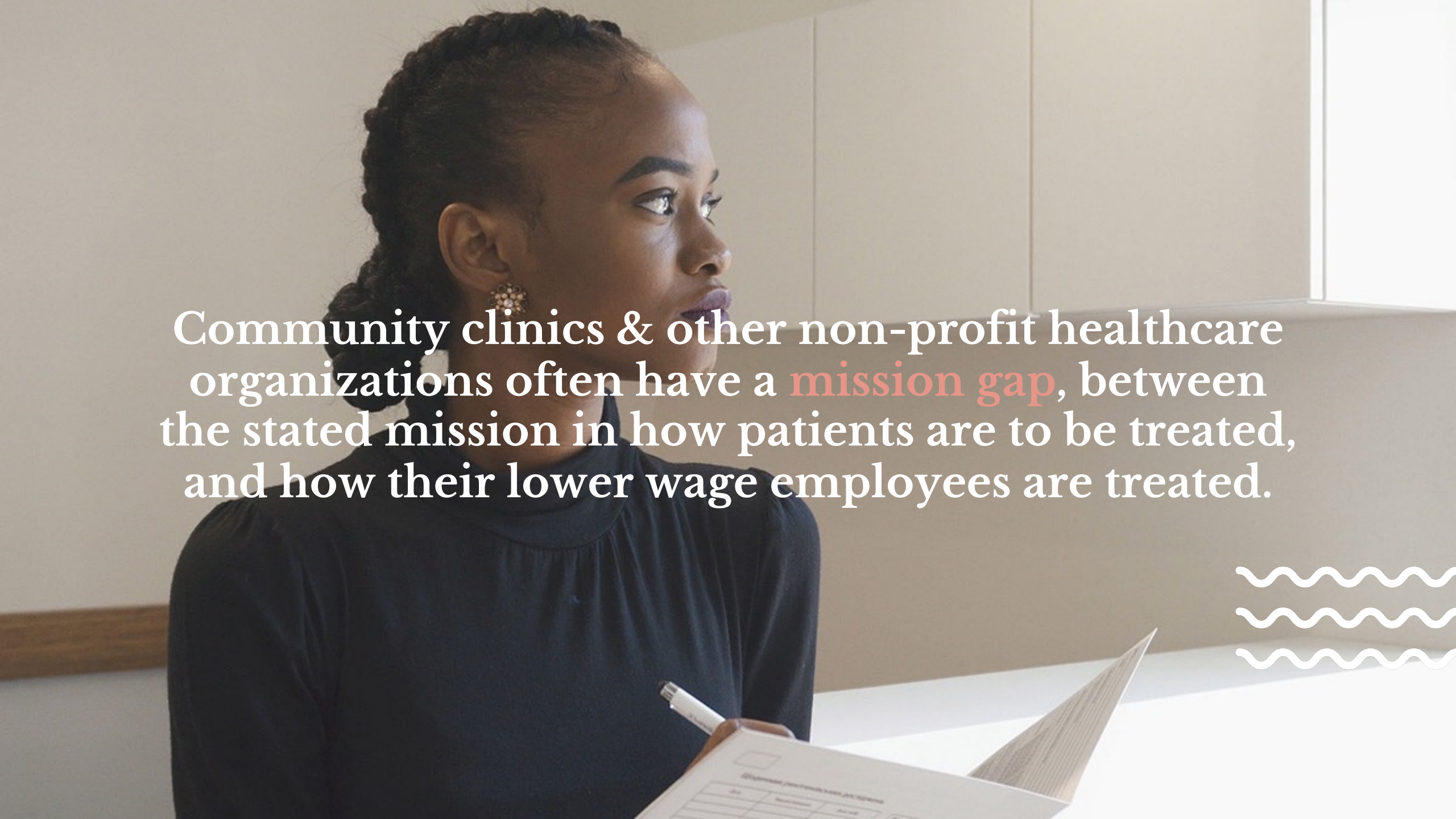


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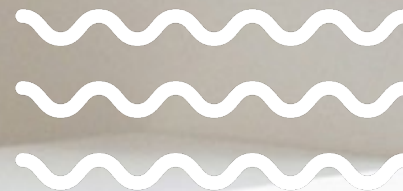
of receptionists in
medical settings
have been
verbally abused

Many healthcare organizations do not acknowledge or address the abuse or the impact it has on their staff. When abuse is dismissed, ignored or disregarded, it replicates an unhealthy family system.



A woman with dark hair styled in braids, wearing a dark blue high-necked top and a large gold earring, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is looking off to the right with a thoughtful expression. She is holding a clipboard with a white pen in her right hand. The background is a simple, light-colored wall with a window on the right side. The text is overlaid on the image in a white serif font, with the words "mission gap" highlighted in red. There are three white wavy lines in the bottom right corner.

Community clinics & other non-profit healthcare organizations often have a **mission gap**, between the stated mission in how patients are to be treated, and how their lower wage employees are treated.





Receptionists are **rarely given** training, resources, or support for their intensely interpersonal work.

A photograph of a medical office. On the left, a male doctor in a white lab coat with a stethoscope around his neck is looking at a blue clipboard. In the center, a female nurse in blue scrubs is smiling and looking at the doctor. On the right, a female receptionist in a light pink blouse is standing behind a wooden reception desk, looking towards the doctor and nurse. The background shows a clean, modern clinic with a white wall, a potted plant, and a small anatomical model on a shelf. Three orange wavy lines are on the left side of the image.

How can we better
support receptionists?

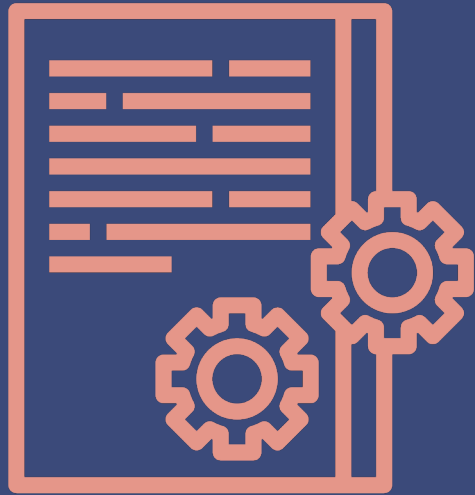


Acknowledge the
true nature of this work



Provide the necessary learning & development activities to support receptionists in highly skilled interpersonal interactions, including developing **empathic connections** with patients, **de-escalation**, & **managing public spaces**.





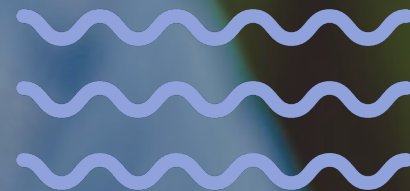
**Develop written
policies & implement
practices to address
verbal abuse of staff**

This should include acknowledging the **seriousness** of verbal abuse, tracking these incidents as **critical events** and providing supportive **debriefing** practices. Also important is the establishment of protocols for **warnings** with patients who have engaged in verbal abuse, and **discharge** protocols for those who have repeatedly infringed.



Re-frame receptionists work as **clinical**. Include receptionists in all huddles, meetings & other health care team communications.

**Consider the
organization's employees
from a health equity lens:**

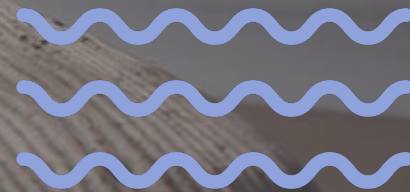
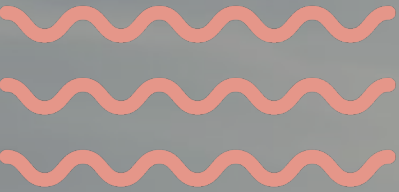




**Even minimally flexible
work schedules have
shown to improve sleep,
mental health, blood
pressure & energy levels**

A person is performing a yoga pose on a wooden pier extending into the ocean. The person is in a tree pose (Vrikshasana) with their arms raised. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

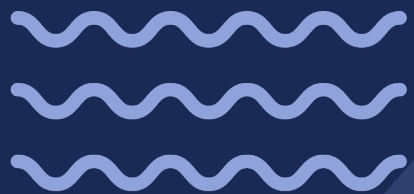
Those with flexible schedules are
more apt to exercise regularly
& to see a doctor





Flexible schedules for
employees are **good health care**

Evaluate receptionists pay scales,
to ensure the deeply important
work they do **matches their pay**





This slide deck was made in honor of Lizette, Elvira, Pham, Jessica, Connie, Marilou, Almalaurea, Vero & all the other hardworking women working as receptionists in medical organizations.

**For more useful resources
please visit:**

www.emorrisonconsulting.com

