Improving Staff Experience at a Sutter Health Primary Care Clinic

Issue:

Time clinicians spend on administrative tasks was rising, as was frustration and burnout. The practice design did not support reporting requirements and EHR use while caring for patients.

- Physician burnout with volume of after-hours paperwork
- Staff not taking/missing breaks

Approach:

Empower staff to identify/solve safety problems and redesign burdensome work.
MAs scribe during patient visit & use EHR to complete documentation in real time.
Reorganize messages/inbox and use visual management to balance work and get timely help to avoid overwhelm.
Daily engagement with "stand-up/stand-down" meetings.
Design work to allow scheduled breaks.
Leadership help chain to remove barriers to care and guide problem solving.

Results:

- Reduced providers after-hours/end-of-day work from 90 to 60 minutes (33% improvement) thanks to documentation completed during the patient visit and before the next patient's cycle. This also reduced the risk of missing a follow-up step.
- 1,500% improvement in the number of employees taking breaks (6% to 92%).
- 300 safety problems were identified by staff and solved in the first 6 months.

Staff Feedback:
"Work was really focused on making it safe for people to speak up and having an environment when people speak up, it's actually celebrated, encouraged, and recognized."
"[Frontline staff] appreciated that they could tackle certain problems themselves."
"The help chain established a clear line of support."
"There is an *esprit de corps* that's different among the team members involved."