



TAKING ACTION
ON OVERUSE

Taking Action on Overuse

**AN ACTION-PLANNING FRAMEWORK
AND CHANGE PACKAGE**

About the Taking Action on Overuse Framework

Taking Action on Overuse addresses the hurdles of behavior change and offers actionable tactics to sustainably change the way health care is delivered. Changing health care practices is difficult. When the change involves refraining from practice (i.e., not performing a procedure or ordering a test) and talking with patients about why doing less or doing nothing is better than doing something—behavior change can be especially challenging.

Our conceptual framework and change package provide a roadmap to reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in health care—what many of us know as “low-value care.” It provides guidance on engaging all members of the health care team, including patients, in these efforts. It identifies four catalysts that create the conditions for change and the activities to initiate and support them:

- Prioritizing the work to address overuse
- Building a culture of trust, innovation, and improvement
- Establishing shared purpose and language
- Committing resources to measurement

These catalysts foster an environment in which clinician teams are able to engage productively in non-threatening, respectful discussions about the potential for harm and their own measures of overuse. These conversations are a medium for reflection, developing solutions, and inspiring the behavior change that leads to reducing overuse. Once the conditions for change are present, and providers and front-line staff feel supported, care teams will become the drivers of ongoing reduction efforts, ensuring sustainability.

Taking Action on Overuse is built on the existing body of work in this area as well as on the expertise of diverse stakeholders. It is the product of a focused literature review, a scan of innovative approaches tried by leading health care organizations across the United States, and the input from a diverse group of stakeholders with expertise in medical overuse, economics, psychology, sociology, media, medicine, and more.

We invite you to apply the framework and share your experience and feedback via our website. Whether you're a clinician championing appropriate care or a chief medical officer working to improve patient safety by reducing the use of unnecessary services, the framework can help you design a pathway to reduce overuse.

Why is this needed?

Unnecessary tests and treatments contribute to escalating health care costs and put patient safety at risk. Recent estimates indicate that yearly, hundreds of billions of dollars in health care expenditures are wasted and hundreds of thousands of patients are harmed by their care. Health care providers still overuse more complex and expensive tests and treatments even when simpler, less invasive, and less expensive alternatives are available. Why? It's easier to go with what is familiar and is common practice. As patients and families struggle under the weight of health care expenses, and overall health care system costs continue to increase, sustainable solutions are essential.

Current models lack the operational guidance for engaging providers and teams in the sustainable reduction of overuse. Most existing theories and frameworks are limited to describing the phenomenon of reducing overuse. And other critically important efforts offer only one piece of the puzzle: they identify what we need to do less of, but now how. The field has been without an action-planning tool or roadmap that leads to long-term, coordinated change by care teams.

Who is this for?

The framework's intended audiences are people and organizations working to reduce overuse.

Whether you are a health care provider, part of a team of clinicians, a health system leader, or a member of a community coalition, this framework can direct you in engaging and supporting providers and front-line staff in doing less of what harms and more of what helps patients. We hope you will adapt it to your own setting and use it to guide your own organization in reducing overuse, while freeing up resources to better serve the needs of your patient population.

How to use this guide

Step 1: Get started by taking the assessment (download at takingactiononoveruse.org). This will help you better understand your organization's overall readiness to tackle overuse and prioritize the work ahead.

Step 2: Choose an overused service to address. For your first overuse reduction initiative, consider selecting a relatively non-controversial overused service. Learn how to measure your selected service, and build trust and transparency as you go.

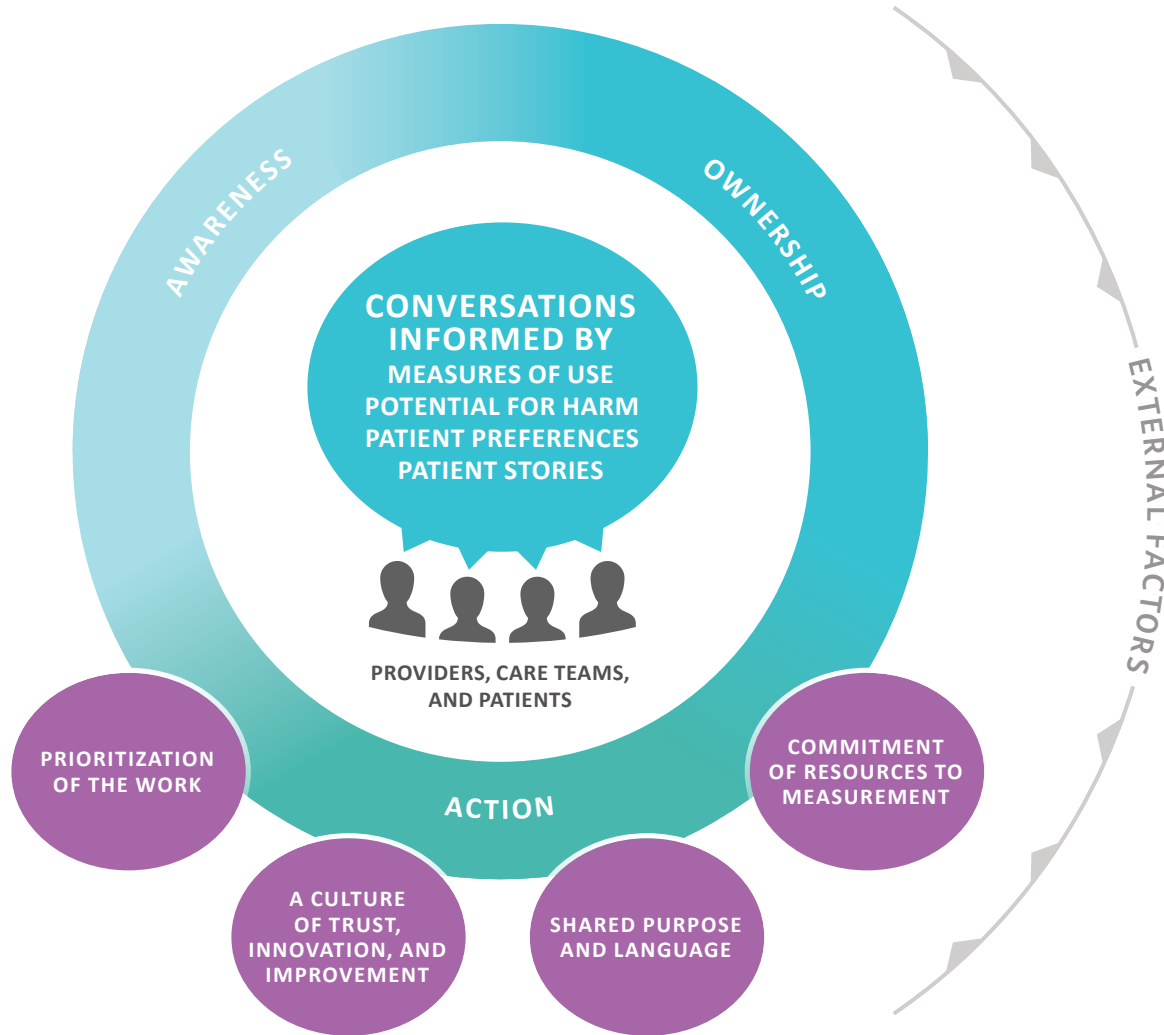
Step 3: Establish a workgroup. The workgroup should be composed of front-line providers, specialists, staff, QI professionals, patients, and other stakeholders with an interest in reducing the overused service. You might draw from existing organizational committees or structures to create this workgroup.

Step 4: Develop an action plan. Using the results of the assessment and the activities listed in the change package, create and regularly update an action plan to address your selected overused service. Remember that effective overuse-reduction initiatives generally involve multiple intervention components, such as clinical decision support, performance feedback, and provider education.

Step 5: Create opportunities for conversations. An effective way to engage providers and staff in overuse reduction efforts is to share stories about how an overused service can lead to patient harm, including physical, emotional, and financial harm. Remember that “data tells, stories sell.” Find opportunities at medical staff meetings, morning huddles, or other standing meetings to share stories of patient harm or “near misses,” provide transparent utilization data, and allow ample time for group discussion.

Step 6: Keep it up! As your project progresses, regularly revisit and revise your action plan. Continue sharing utilization data to track your progress in reducing overuse, and celebrate your successes. Remember that starting a new overuse reduction project involves a lot of upfront work. Please reach out to the Taking Action on Overuse team to let us know how you have used the framework and this change package, what your experience has been like, and what tools would be helpful in supporting implementation.

The Framework



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Contact us

Please reach out to the Taking Action on Overuse program office at info@takingactiononoveruse.org to let us know how you have used the framework, what tools would be helpful, and your overall impressions of it.

MacColl Center for Health Care Innovation

Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation