

1. INTRODUCTION

The downgrading means testing framework allows private patients at restructured hospitals who pass the means test to be downgraded to subsidised ward classes. Patients may be advised to apply for downgrading, taking into consideration the potential huge bill size and his financial means. Patients who are keen for downgrading are required to be means-tested at Business Office. He must provide pertinent information such as Annual Value of his property, employment income or any other source of income in order for Business Office to establish the per capital family income. Patients are eligible for downgrading if the income criteria is met.

2. METHODOLOGY

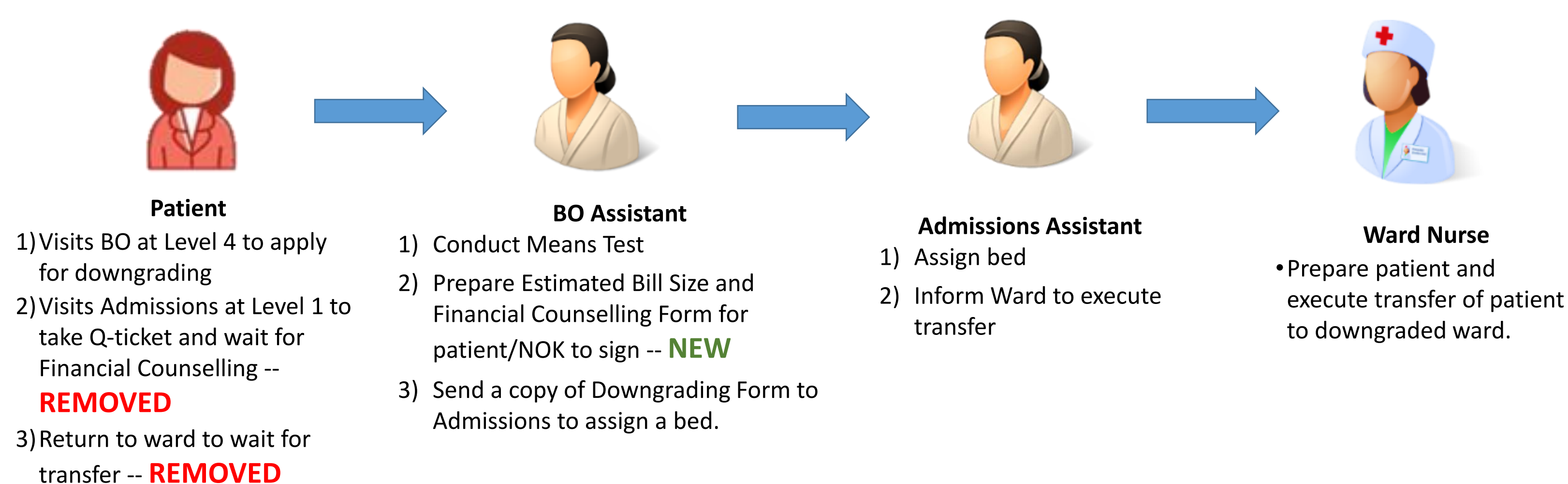
When a patient or Next-of-Kin (NOK) visits Business Office at Children's Tower Level 4 to apply for downgrading, he is required to provide supporting documents such as IRAS Income Tax Assessment Form, CPF Statement of Accounts or computerised payslips, in order for the staff to establish the Annual Value of property and per capital family income. Individual declaration may be accepted on exceptional basis.

Once the downgrading is approved, the patient or NOK subsequently proceeds to Main Admissions, Level 1 to go through Financial Counselling. He has to pick up a Q-matic ticket at the Information Counter before joining the queue for Financial Counselling. There are occasions where patients or NOK experience long waiting time during peak period before they are being served. On average, during peak period, the wait time can be 45 minutes to an hour. In the meantime in the ward, nurses would have to be involved to watch over the young patients when their NOK go through the downgrading paperwork at Admissions. In other circumstances, we notice patients who accompanied their NOK and waited together with them at the Admissions Wait Area for Financial Counselling. Once the Financial Counselling is completed, patient and/or NOK may then return to the ward and await transfer to the downgraded ward of class.

Under the revised process, the trip to Admissions and the wait time were eliminated through the provision of a One-Stop Service at Business Office.

Once a patient is determined to be eligible for downgrading at Business Office, staff who conducted the means-testing will prepare the revised Estimated Bill Size and Financial Counselling form for his acknowledgement. The patient or NOK may return to the ward to await transfer to the downgraded ward. He does not need to visit Admissions at Level 1 anymore.

The Business Office staff will send a copy of the approved downgrading form to the Bed Management Unit in Admissions to assign a bed. Once a bed has been allocated, she will inform the current ward to execute the transfer.



3. RESULTS

With the introduction of the revised process, patients and their NOK experience greater convenience and as a result, positive feedback were received. Staff are also delighted as they do not need to manage patients who are frustrated or annoyed after a 45-minute to an hour wait to be served.

Tangible savings will also noted. About 8 minutes will be shaved off the total patient's transaction time for Means Test and Financial Counselling with the provision of One-Stop Service at Business Office. Given a monthly average of 130 cases, a total of \$693 savings can be generated every month.

<u>Business Office Staff</u>	<u>Previous Workflow Time taken</u>	<u>Revised Workflow Time taken</u>
Perform Means Test	10 mins	10 mins
Prepare Estimated Bill Size and Financial Counselling (FC)	15 mins (undertaken by Admissions)	7 mins (handled by BO once patient passes Means Test)
Total Transaction Time experienced by patient/NOK	<u>25 mins</u>	<u>17 mins</u>

Feedback from patients and staff

Process was simple and easy to understand. I expected to wait half a day for my child to be transferred to a lower ward but it was all completed within an hour. Thanks.
Mr Teo, father of 5-year old patient admitted in April 2015

In my wife's previous admission, I needed to visit Admissions and BO and waited more than 30 minutes to be attended to. Now, everything is done at BO and I was attended to the moment I entered the office. I'm delighted.
Mr Tay, husband of 60 year old Gynaecology patient.

We are able to focus more on conducting Financial Counselling for patients before admission and this has enabled us to manage the Financial Counselling wait time better.
Azrah, Admissions Officer

It is not difficult for us to generate the Estimated Bill Size and Financial Counselling. Revised Workflow is better for patient or their NOK and we will gladly do it.
Michelle, Business Office Associate

4. CONCLUSION

Business Office and Admissions recognise the need to eliminate the inconvenience and anxiety that patients and their Next-of-Kin faced during downgrading. Hence, teams from both departments put their differences aside, came together to troubleshoot and resolved the issues with a common objective to meet. The revised process is the product of collaboration and synergy between 2 departments. Staff are encouraged by the outcome of teamwork and have moved on to embark on other initiatives where processes in both departments can be optimised through collaboration so as to improve patient experience.