

Risk Tip: No Shows and Cancelled Appointments

Routinely following up on no show and canceled appointments is a good risk management practice. Finding out why they failed to keep scheduled appointments may help you to work with patients to correct their behavior. In the event of a no show or cancelled appointment follow these steps:

1. Notify the physician/designated staffer that a patient is a no show or has cancelled an appointment.
 - a. If urgent action is required, the physician/designated staffer will flag and return the chart without delay for staff to call immediately.
 - b. If the physician/designated staffer determines follow up is not urgent, call the patient within 24 hours of the missed appointment.
2. If the patient is reached on the first attempt, ask the patient to reschedule.
 - a. If patient doesn't want to reschedule, ask why and document the reason as well as the call. Return the chart to the physician/designated staffer.
 - b. If the patient reschedules, document the call and date of rescheduled appointment and return the chart to the records.
3. If the call is answered by the patient's answering machine, leave a message advising the patient of the missed appointment and instruct the patient to reschedule the appointment as soon as possible. (Patients must consent to having messages left on their answering machines.)
 - a. Flag the patient's chart for follow up in one week to check if appointment was rescheduled.
 - b. If appointment was not rescheduled, return to step #1.
4. If there is no answer, no answering machine, or the patient has not consented to answering machine messages, document the call attempt in the patient's record and call again within two business days.
 - a. Repeat and document as necessary.
 - b. After three failed attempts, alert the physician/designated staffer that attempts to contact the no-show patient were unsuccessful.
5. If the physician/designated staffer determines the patient must be seen, send the patient a letter via registered mail, return receipt requested advising the patient of the need to reschedule the appointment. The letter should include the physician's signature. Keep a copy of the letter and the signed return receipt in the patient's file.

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