Missed Appointments

Purpose: To identify those patients missing appointments or canceling with late notice and then notifying them by letter

Responsibility: Front Office Staff

Prior to Procedure:
1. Patients are given a copy of our policy regarding canceling appointments at their first visit to the office or as soon as possible after establishing care in the office.
2. Required cancellation notice is:
   - One business day for CPE, WCC, procedures.
   - Four hours for same day or chief complaint visits.
3. Patients who miss an appointment without appropriate notice shall receive a letter as follows:
   - 1st missed appointment: Letter #1
   - 2nd missed appointment: Letter #2
   - 3rd missed appointment: Letter #3 Send the letter by certified mail with return receipt requested; and file a copy of the letter and delivery receipt in the patient’s chart. Give the patient 30 days notice of the termination. Sent by provider request. Under some circumstances, a verbal notice may be sufficient, but always document the discussion in the chart. An example might be a patient who frequently moves or has no permanent address. In some situations, such as one with a violent or threatening patient, you can terminate the therapeutic relationship immediately, without 30 days’ notice.

Procedure:
1. When an appointment is missed a notation is made on the fee slip for that visit by the reception staff. A notation is also made in the chart that an appointment was missed.
2. By close of business on the day of the missed appointment, the chart and fee slip are given to the clinician whose appointment was missed for review.
3. The clinician will make a determination as to whether or not the missed appointment letter should be sent to the individual who missed the appointment. The clinician will note this on the fee slip.
4. The chart will be returned to Reception who will send out the appropriate letter and document this in the patient chart.
5. In the case of Letter #3 being sent, when the return receipt is returned from the Postal Service it should be placed in the chart which will be given to the clinician of record for final review and sign-off.

Background:

Generally, you can terminate a patient at any time and for any reason. The most common reasons to fire a patient include unwillingness to pay the bill, noncompliance, or a personality conflict.

The exceptions are that you may not stop treating a hospital inpatient, a patient in unstable condition, or a number of patients from any special population or socioeconomic group. This will protect you from charges of abandonment or discrimination. If it is necessary to terminate a patient in one of these groups from the practice, you must first arrange for another clinician to assume the patient’s care. You also cannot discharge a patient for discriminatory reasons such as race, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, or handicap. Be aware that some health plans restrict your ability to discharge plan patients.

Furthermore, the traditional right to discharge a patient may be subject to new ethical and legal developments. For example, it has been suggested that patient noncompliance is so common that it does
not ethically justify a denial of further care. The same writer suggests that the Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, may prevent discharging a patient whose noncompliance is the result of a physical or psychological disorder.

If you have a patient who does not comply with your recommended treatment, who does not pay medical bills, or who becomes in some way a “problem patient,” you can terminate your therapeutic relationship with that patient. However, this action should be taken only in extreme or unusual circumstances. If you decide to terminate the clinician-patient relationship, ethically and legally you should usually write the patient saying you will no longer be his or her practitioner, and you should provide adequate time to find a new health care provider. You will also need to transfer the patient’s medical records to the new provider.

Missed Appointment Letter #1

Date:  
Address  
Dear:  
You have recently missed your scheduled appointment time or you have cancelled your appointment without giving prior notice. Because our office had reserved the time for you, another client was unable to receive the care they need at that time.  
We realize that life is busy and you may have forgotten or misplaced your appointment card. We believe that you, as a patient, deserve our utmost respect in the care we give you. At the same time, we request you give our office the common courtesy of making every attempt to keep scheduled appointments. If you cannot make an appointment, we request you give us at least one day’s notice prior to the appointment or change your appointment as soon as you realize you have a conflict.  
Please see your office policy sheet you received at your first visit or request another copy when you return for your next visit. FamilyCare of Kent may dismiss a patient from the practice with the 3rd late cancellation or ‘no show’.  
Sincerely,  
Maddy Wiley, ARNP  Kathy Kleiver, ARNP  Bob Smithing, ARNP  Brenda Lee, ARNP

1 Orentlicher, D. “Treatment to the Noncompliant Patient,” JAMA, 265(12);1579, March 27, 1991.
Missed Appointment Letter #2

Date: 

Address 

Dear: 

We notice you missed your last appointment or cancelled at the last minute on ______. We are concerned about your care. If a mistake has been made about your appointment, please let us know. Please telephone the office at 253-859-2273 to reschedule your appointment.

In order to provide you with the best quality of medical care, it is essential that you keep your appointments. In addition, if we had been advised of your cancellation in a timely manner, other people in need of care would have used this appointment. Please call and cancel or reschedule appointments at least 24 hours in advance.

We note that this is your second missed appointment. It is our policy to dismiss from our practice anyone who has missed three (3) appointments. We want to serve you and it is not our desire to do this. We support you in having your health be the best. Please help us to improve our service by keeping your appointments as scheduled.

Sincerely,

Maddy Wiley, ARNP
Bob Smithing, ARNP
Kathy Kleiver, ARNP
Brenda Lee, ARNP

Missed Appointment Letter #3

Date: 

Address 

Dear:

We notice you missed your last appointment or cancelled at the last minute on ______. As stated in 2 previous letters, it is our policy to dismiss from our practice anyone who has missed three (3) appointments. Therefore, you will need to find another health care provider. We will see you for urgent medical problems only for 30 days while you transition to another clinic. We wish you good health in the future.

Sincerely, 

Maddy Wiley, ARNP
Bob Smithing, ARNP
Kathy Kleiver, ARNP
Brenda Lee, ARNP
Molina Missed First Appointment Letter

Date: __________________________

Patient Name: __________________________

DOB: __________________________

To Whom It May Concern:

This patient “no showed” their first appointment at FamilyCare of Kent. Per our clinic policy, they are dismissed from care here and need to be reassigned.

Thank you.

Maddy Wiley, ARNP
FamilyCare of Kent
Clinic Director

Written: 4/2000
Revised: 12/21/2008
Reviewed: