

Department of Veterans Affairs
Kansas City VA Medical Center
4801 Linwood Blvd
Kansas City, Mo. 64128

December 2009

FACILITY POLICY ON PATIENTS ARRIVING LATE TO SCHEDULED OUTPATIENT
CLINIC APPOINTMENTS

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for clinic staff when patients arrive after their scheduled appointment time.

Guiding Principles:

1. The decision to accommodate a late patient by working them into the schedule despite a late arrival is ultimately within the judgment of the clinical provider, who has the best opportunity to assess whether this patient can be accommodated without compromise to other patient care responsibilities.
2. It is the expectation that all providers will make a reasonable attempt to accommodate patients who arrive late for a scheduled appointment, recognizing that in many instances the late arrival was related to circumstances beyond the patient's control and that many of our patients have significant travel distances.
3. If an individual patient is consistently late for clinical appointments, the clinical provider has the option, in coordination with service line management, to develop specific guidance for this particular patient as to the expectations for timeliness and the consequences of future late arrivals to clinical appointments. This plan should be documented in CPRS and communicated in writing to the Veteran.

Policy:


It is the policy of this hospital to establish clinic appointment schedules that enable patients to receive medical care when they need it, and to enable our clinic staffs to work efficiently to optimize the number of patients served. In support of this policy, it is expected that patients will be present in the clinic at scheduled appointment times. This policy deals specifically with situations in which a patient has not checked into a clinic by the scheduled time of his or her appointment.

Responsibility:

To implement this policy, responsible service lines will establish specific procedures that:

- (1) Encourage patients to arrive early enough that necessary tests and assessments can be complete by the time of their appointment with clinic providers.
- (2) Insure patients arriving 20 minutes or less late from the scheduled appointment time are promptly checked in and seen as soon as practicable in that clinic session while not delaying the appointments of other scheduled patients.
- (3) When a patient arrives more than 20 minutes late, a clinic nursing staff member is immediately notified by the clerk and promptly interviews the patient. That nurse will then notify the clinic provider with whom the patient has an appointment. The provider will decide the disposition of the patient, which may include seeing the patient that day, rescheduling the appointment, assisting with medication renewal, etc. If the patient is to be seen, procedures will be designed to minimize further delays in checking in and assessing the patient. If the patient's appointment is rescheduled, the scheduled appointment for that day will be "cancelled by clinic".
- (4) Promote opportunities to accommodate late-arriving patients. For instance, if a patient has not arrived for a scheduled appointment and clinic staff have the next patient ready to be seen, providers will be able see a late arriving patient in an appointment time made available by seeing the first patient ahead of time.
- (5) Do not divert patients arriving late to the Emergency Department (including "same day care" or "fast track") unless that patient has an emergent medical condition. Nor will they be sent to other clinics unless already scheduled.

This policy has been made in partnership with AFGE Local 910 therefore any changes or revisions must be reviewed and approved by both union locals.




KENT D. HILL
Director, KCVA

date



LINDA McEWEN
President AFGE Local 910

1-7-10
date



BRYAN BALDWIN
President AFGE Local 2263

27 JAN 10
date