



Standard Operating Procedure

Procedure Title:	Patient Late Arrival Policy
Date:	04/15/2020
Version:	1.0
Department:	Reception / MA
Approved By:	

Purpose: Our goal is to see as many patients as possible while continuing to provide the highest quality of care. It is important to avoid rescheduling patients unless absolutely necessary. There are malpractice risks to consider when turning patients away. More importantly, patients are far more satisfied with the care they receive when their provider runs late and then gives them quality time within their own visit, than they are when they are rescheduled. Each late patient and how their tardiness affect subsequent patients

Definitions:

- **Check In Time:** Patients are asked to arrive to their appointments before their scheduled appointment time to allow enough time for the registration process to be completed prior to their scheduled appointment time. This is referred to as their “check in” time.
 - New patients are to check in 20 minutes before their scheduled appointment time with completed new patient paperwork
 - Established patients are to check in 10 minutes before their scheduled appointment time.
- **Scheduled Appointment Time:** Time at which the patient’s appointment is scheduled to begin.
- **Late Arrival:** A patient is considered late if they arrive for check in on or after their scheduled appointment time.

Procedure:

If a patient arrives late for their appointment the patient will be *kindly* made aware of their late arrival and that, if the schedule permits, we will get them in. Please use the following script for Late Arrivals:

- **Script:** “Hi Mr. Tardy McRunslate, let’s get you checked in as quickly as possible! Your check in time was 8:50 AM and it’s 9:10 AM now, so I’m going to run back and check with Jill’s MA as soon as we are done to be sure your provider will have enough time with you before their next patient.”
- ***Note:** See below for overcoming objections.
- Receptionist then send MA(s) a message letting them know that the patient has arrived late.
 - Receptionist should seek out an MA if they do not receive a response by the time check in is completed.

- The MA will let the receptionist know they received the message and then check the provider's schedule. If they are uncertain if the provider will have time with their patient due to the late arrival, the MA will go directly to the provider and determine whether the patient should reschedule.
 - **Note* If the provider is running behind and still with their previous patient then the patient should be immediately roomed, rather than checking with the provider.*
- If the provider decides the patient needs to be rescheduled in order to have adequate time with them, the MA will relay that information to the patient, along with their scheduling options.
 - "Hi Mr. McRunslate, I just spoke with (provider's name) and we *would* like to reschedule you to the next best time that would work for you."
 - **Note: See below for overcoming objections.*
 - If a receptionist is available, the MA will direct the patient to that receptionist and explain the next steps for rescheduling.
 - If a receptionist is not available, the MA will handle rescheduling the patient.
- The details of the reschedule will be notated in the Late Arrival Reschedule Log located at the front desk.

Overcoming Objections:

Customer service and patient care is not always easy, in fact, it can be downright stressful! Take care of yourself by remembering that we are here to serve our patients and provide the highest quality of care with every decision we make. If a provider decides a patient should be rescheduled, it is because that is what is best for that patient, as well as their subsequent patients. Take comfort in know that we are doing all that we can to serve them.

At Check In:

- **Objection 1:** "But my appointment was at 9 and I'm only 9 minutes late!"
 - "Your check in was at 8:50 to allow us time to complete check in and get you roomed in time to start your appointment at 9:00. Don't worry just yet! I'm going to touch base with the MA and we will do everything we can to get you in to see your provider. Go ahead and have a seat in reception."
- **Objection 2:** "My provider runs late ALL THE TIME!"
 - "Our providers can definitely run behind at times and we so appreciate your patience in those circumstances. We try to make sure appointments start when they are scheduled and we *always* try to make sure that you get the time you need with your provider. So don't worry just yet! I'm going to touch base with the MA and we will do everything we can to get you in to see your provider. Go ahead and have a seat in reception."
- **Objection 3:** "I drove all this way for nothing! / I took time off work for this!"

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- Don't worry just yet! Let's finish getting you checked in as quickly as we can. I'm going to touch base with the MA and we will do everything we can to get you in to see your provider."

MA Rescheduling:

- Objection 1: "I was only 9 minutes late."
 - "I understand and we can usually squeeze people in, but (provider) would only have a few minutes with you before their next appointment starts and they really want to make sure they have enough time with you. Right now we do have openings this afternoon or we can look at another day that might work better for you."
- Objection 2: "I only need my prescription refilled and to hear if my labs came back normal. I'm okay if the visit is only 5 minutes."
 - "I know it can seem like it will be quick, but I can tell you from experience that ALL appointments take longer than 5 or even 15 minutes. I know your provider will need as much time with you as they do with all of their other patients, which is why they would like you to reschedule. I do have an opening at 3:00 today if that works for you? If not, I'm happy to find another day that would work for your schedule?"