

Risk Tip: Termination of Care-Abusive Behavior

Ensuring proper warning and termination procedures related to abusive behaviour is necessary. The following is intended to help providers, managers, and staff be familiar with the procedures for addressing patient dismissal from the practice. Should the patient request an appeal to the termination, the request should be reviewed and considered by the office manager/physician.

Abusive behavior is any physical or verbal action that intentionally harms or injures another person or any physical or verbal action with the intent to do such harm. This also includes harassment, manipulative behavior, and other behaviors that can be construed as abusive.

Should a patient engage in behavior that is considered to be abusive in nature (verbal or physical), the staff and/or provider may institute approved guidelines for immediate termination or defer to approved guidelines for issuing letters of warning and termination.

We suggest a zero-tolerance policy toward a client's abusive behavior toward others, including staff or other patients, and visitors. This can also include disrupting the practice facilities that interferes with the ability to deliver services to other patients.

Steps to take:

- If you at all feel that your safety is threatened, you or have another staff member dial 911 immediately
- Notify the office manager immediately
- Complete a telephone encounter and gather written statements from all staff who witnessed the event and scan miscellaneous/supporting documents to the patient's chart
- Office manager will discuss a plan of action with the physician(s)
- Only after a decision to terminate has been made by the appropriate parties the office manager will send a certified letter to the patient with a return receipt requested.

A completed termination letter will need to include:

- Signature from the provider
- Release of Information form
- Comment regarding contacting their local medical society or local hospital physician referral service to whom the patient may choose to transfer their care

Next steps:

- Place a copy of the termination letter in the patient's record
- Patient will be given 30 days to find another provider. Emergent/urgent care during this the 30day window may be provided.
- After 30 days from the date of the termination letter, patient will no longer be able to receive care.

Should a patient engage in behavior that is considered abusive in nature (verbal or physical) but is not considered by the provider or staff to warrant immediate termination, follow these steps:

- Consult the patient's record to determine whether any prior incidents of noncompliance or abusive behavior have occurred in the past
- If this is the patient's first offense, document all events in the patient's chart
- If the patient has had prior offenses, inform office manager.
 - The office manager will develop a potential action plan if warranted

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