

Communication in Outpatient Settings

Providers

Establishing a plan for effective communication with your patient is critical in delivering safe and competent care. A plan should be developed at the first point of contact with the patient. Including a **Communication Access Plan (CAP)** in the patient's EMR or paper chart will ensure accurate and consistent information for all staff and health care providers.

Scheduling Appointments

Online Scheduling

Online patient portals should be utilized for hard of hearing and deaf patients, whenever possible. Make the CAP available through the portal and ask the patient to complete it.

Phone Scheduling

Scheduling appointments may require additional time if the patient is using a captioned phone or calling through a relay operator.

- Ask *all* patients if they need communication assistance for their visits.
- Ask patients to email or fax a copy of their CAP, or bring a copy to their appointment.
- Discuss and determine what aids and services are available and will be provided for patient's appointment.
- Repeat back date and time of appointment to confirm understanding.
- Send email to patient confirming date and time of appointment.
- Provide patient with text number or email address to notify staff if they will be late for an appointment.
- Display universal "hearing loss" symbol on all forms and paper chart.

Outpatient Visits

Prior to Patient's Arrival

- Be sure communication aids and services are available and ready for use.
- Be sure staff is familiar with devices and services.
- Highlight sections of forms to be completed by patient.
- Be sure TV in the waiting area has the captions displayed.

Patient's Arrival

- Ask patients to complete a CAP if they have not already done so.
- Refer to the CAP to identify how patient prefers to be alerted when they are ready to be seen by the provider.
- Look directly at the patient when speaking.
- When escorting patient to dressing room or treatment room, stop and face them before speaking.

Refer to *Communicating with Hard of Hearing and Deaf Patients* in the Provider section of this Guide for more information.

Visit with Provider

- Review patient's CAP and allow time to discuss communication devices or services to be used.
- Provide in writing, all information related to treatment, diagnoses, follow-up, and medication, including any ototoxic effects.
- Use teach-back to encourage questions and ensure understanding.
- Provide name, phone number, and email address of contact person if patient has questions or concerns.
- Document aids and services used during the visit in the EMR or paper chart.