

Guideline

Specialist Outpatient Services Patient Focussed Bookings Guideline

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Summary The Specialist Outpatient Services Patient Focussed Booking Guideline provides SA Health employees and agents involved in the delivery of specialist outpatient services a consistent approach to the management of patient bookings for specialist outpatient clinic appointments. It aims to ensure timely and efficient access to services for all patients whilst minimising inefficiencies and rework created by cancelled lists and non-attendance of patients at a booked specialist outpatient appointment.

Keywords Specialist outpatient services, Patient focussed booking, Guideline

Policy history Is this a new policy? **Y**
Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **N**
Does this policy replace an existing policy? **N**

Applies to All SA Health Portfolio
All Department for Health and Ageing Divisions
All Local Health Networks

Staff impact All Staff, Management, Admin, Students; Volunteers
All Clinical, Medical, Nursing, Allied Health, Emergency, Dental, Mental Health, Pathology, Midwifery

PDS reference G0120

Version control and change history

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	06/09/2012	Current	Original Version

Specialist Outpatient Services

Patient Focussed Bookings

1. Purpose/Background

This Guideline provides SA Health employees and agents involved in the delivery of specialist outpatient services a consistent approach to the management of patient bookings for specialist outpatient clinic appointments. It aims to ensure timely and efficient access to services for all patients whilst minimising inefficiencies and rework created by cancelled lists and non-attendance of patients at a booked specialist outpatient appointment.

Ensuring timely and equitable access to care underpins public specialist outpatient clinics in South Australia. Local Health Networks are encouraged to implement strategies to manage demand and improve capacity of specialist outpatient clinics under the four key principles of patient focussed booking:

- Making patient appointments no more than 4 – 6 weeks in advance
- Establishing an intention to attend before making appointment
- Ensuring appointment times are staggered and accurately reflect consultation time
- Communicating directly with the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) to negotiate appointments.

Patient non-attendance at booked outpatient appointments without prior notification adversely affects the service and patient outcomes in the following ways:

- When 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) patient appointments are re-scheduled, their appointment takes the slot of another patient who could have attended. This contributes to longer waiting times for appointments.
- There is lost capacity within the clinic.
- The use of resources to follow up and rebook patient appointments, which could have been otherwise utilised.

2. Responsibility

This Guideline articulates the rights and responsibilities of:

- Clinicians, Administrative, and support staff who work within specialist outpatient services.
- Patients or the carer/guardian of patients (where appropriate) who are referred to specialist outpatient services.

Ensuring this Guideline is supported remains the responsibility of all employees involved in making the referral, receiving the referral and ensuring ongoing management of the referral.

Local Health Network (LHN) Chief Executives are responsible for ensuring that specialist outpatient services manage referrals consistent with the principles of the Specialist Outpatient Services Patient Focussed Booking Guideline

3. Guideline Detail

3.1. Education and Information

Specialist outpatient clinics will inform and educate patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) about the importance of attending clinic appointments. Education may include the provision of information about patient responsibilities and the effects of missed appointments on service provision.

In addition, the following measures should be used to reduce the number of missed appointments:

- Keeping the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) and the referring practitioner informed through written and/or verbal communication.
- Negotiating appointment times and dates directly with patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate), using patient focused booking.
- Reducing the number of specialist follow-up visits. Once the episode of care has concluded patients are returned to the care of the referring practitioner.
- Auditing of outpatient booking lists monthly.
- Ensuring prompt contact with patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) following non-attendance of a specialist clinic.

Local Health Networks will implement procedures to identify patients who do not attend their specialist outpatient appointment. Written notification of failure to attend will be sent to the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) and referrer.

Specialist outpatient clinics will ensure that patients are not disadvantaged as a result of clinic initiated cancellations.

3.2. New Patients

Patients who are scheduled but have not as yet attended their first specialist appointment (New patients) have not commenced their episode of care and as such remain the responsibility of the referring practitioner.

Failure of New Patients to attend their first specialist outpatient appointment without notification will result in the referral and an accompanying letter advising the General Practitioner of non-attendance. These patients will be removed from the booking queue at the time of initiating the letter.

Patients who miss a scheduled appointment should not receive a new appointment until their intention to attend has been determined.

3.3. Review Patients

Review Patients are those patients who have attended their first specialist appointment, however, have not completed their episode of care. Clinic staff will attempt to contact the Review Patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) who fail to attend an appointment without notification to ascertain the reason for non-attendance, establish intention to attend and negotiate a further appointment. This process could be either by phone or a written Patient Focussed Booking process requesting the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) contact the clinic. Failure to make reasonable contact with the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) through any of these means will result in the patient being discharged from the appointment system with notification sent to the patient or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) and the referrer.

Review patients who fail to attend on two consecutive occasions without notification will be removed from the appointment booking queue. The patient's referring doctor and/or general practitioner will be notified in writing of the removal and will be given follow up instructions as per the *Active Discharge from Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline*.

There may be circumstances where a patient is at high risk of deterioration or have complex health issues that require medical assessment. In these cases a medical review is indicated and follow up may be warranted with their General Practitioner.

Please note that in a paediatric setting additional localised process will be required to address children who are vulnerable, Aboriginal or under the Guardianship of the Minister.

3.4. Roles and Responsibilities

Specialist Outpatient Services will:

- Ensure every effort has been made to communicate effectively with all patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate), particularly those of a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background and vision / hearing impaired.
- Exercise discretion to avoid disadvantaging patients in the case of genuine hardship, misunderstandings and other unavoidable circumstances.
- Inform and educate patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate) about the effects of non-attendance in order to minimise occurrence and consequences of missed appointments.
- Negotiate appointment times and dates directly with patients or their carer/guardian (where appropriate).
- Notify the referrer / GP of the patient's failure to attend and/or their removal from the appointment queue.
- Ensure that high risk patients who DNA are followed up to determine whether they intend to attend a further appointment.

3.5. Patient / Carer will:

- Advise the specialist outpatient clinic of any changes to their contact details.
- Attend appointments provided by the specialist outpatient clinic.
- Advise the specialist outpatient clinic if they have changed your mind, or need to cancel or postpone their appointment.
- Take responsibility for their health and treatment as outlined in the SA Health 'Your Rights and Responsibilities' publication.

4. Definitions

Appointment Queue: A register which contains details about patients who are waiting for a specialist outpatient clinic appointment.

Clinician: A generic term used to describe a wide range of health professionals

DNA: Did not attend. A patient who does not attend their appointment and fails to provide notice of this.

Employee: Is employed by SA Health to perform a job subject to the directions of the workplace. Each employee has a contract of employment

Episode of Care: A single course of treatment which commences at the first consultation, continues through treatment / opinion and concludes when the patient is returned to the care of the referring practitioner.

General Practitioner: A medical practitioner who works in primary health care and refers patients to specialist medical care.

New Patient: A patient newly referred attending a clinic for the first time for a particular condition.

Referral: A request for a specialist consultation for a particular condition.

Review Patient: A patient who has attended their first specialist appointment but who has not completed their episode of care.

Specialist: A medical practitioner who has become specialised in a specific area of medicine and usually has a private practice.

Specialist outpatient clinic: Specialist outpatient services provided by a specialist or expert clinician that is recognised by the relevant professional college, board or association.

5. Associated Directives and/or Guidelines

eA523220	Specialist Outpatient Services Directive
eA524282	Referral to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline
eA524287	Emergency Department Referrals to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline
eA524289	Active Discharge from Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline
eA518245	Medicare Billing for Private Non-admitted Patients in SA Health Local Health Network Outpatient Clinics

6. References

SA Health: Your Rights and Responsibilities – A Charter for consumers of the South Australian Public Health System