

APPENDIX F

REDUCING NO SHOWS AND CANCELLATIONS

To start with, reflect on the concept that “money saved is just as good as money earned.” Reducing cancellations and no-shows is good business.

Also, consider the expectation clients may have that your office is like a medical clinic where there is so much traffic that a missed appointment won’t matter too much. It certainly matters in a direct way to you. How are they to know if you don’t tell them?

1. Explain your policy on the phone, not just on your intake form. Far from this being a turn-off for the client, no-shows decreased when a phone conversation was used.
2. If possible, the therapist seeing the client should do the phone contact to begin right away establishing a relationship. If a front office person does the phone intake, give that person training in telephone interviewing to increase the chances of a good first impression. A reminder card, e-mail or text message are other alternatives with appropriate signed permission by clients.
3. Adhere to a firm but flexible policy. Make no exceptions in applying the policy, but make the conditions reasonable. For example, state how far in advance the client must cancel to avoid paying (e.g., 24 hours); perhaps allow one missed session without penalty; and for missed sessions where there is a penalty, charge half price. Try to address at intake issues the client may face such as child care schedules, late hours at work, and so on. See if there are ways you and the client can work around these issues.
4. Establish a procedure for contacting clients to remind them in advance of their appointments, at least initially. If you do this, you will want your clients to know that they may expect contact; put it on your intake form. Also, ask what form of contact for a reminder is preferred.
5. Bill for missed appointments right away. If the procedure is that clients pay at the time of each session, then the missed appoint payment needs to be made at their next kept appointment.
6. How tough should you be in collecting for missed appointments? It is recommended that Centers try to collect but do not recommend using a collection agency. “If the client doesn’t follow through on the first bill, it’s just a lot of effort with diminishing returns.”