**Best Practices in Patient Collections and Billing**

**Evaluate Your Intake Process and Personnel**

- Your intake and front desk employees must become part of the solution
- Must motivate employees to collect
  - Accountability
  - Training and Assistance
- Employees must be able to clearly articulate your patient payment policies
- Help your administrative and clinical staff support each other where needed
- Keep current with vendors
  - Seek for technologies and services that can help increase collections
- Train all staff thoroughly
  - Staff must know and believe in policies
  - Clinical and billing staff must train and educate registration and front office staff on costs of individual services in order to explain extra charges to patients

**Communicate Your Policies and Expectations to the Patient**

- Create awareness of payment and billing policies at the first point of contact
- Make sure that patients understand the medical services they may require and the corresponding fees for those services
- Be clear that all payment is expected at the time of service
  - In full
  - Co-pay, co-insurance, deductibles
  - Old balance
- Provide best estimation of anticipated costs prior to date of service.
- Encourage open discussions regarding fees:
  - Be professional and sympathetic
  - Determine potential financial concerns before treatment
  - Work through problems and issues with insurance/finances before treatment
- Always show full cost of services, not only discounted pricing
  - Post regular charge for the 10 most frequently performed services in the waiting area
  - Have available to review upon request a brochure listing regular charges for most or all of the services performed
  - Make the regular charge for the 10 most frequent services available to civic organizations, health-benefit plans or other community groups

**Accept as Many Forms of Payment as Possible**

- Make it convenient for patients to pay at the time of service and encourage them to do so
- Give patients every opportunity to pay - patients often feel more satisfied when they have more payment options
- You may offer any of the following options:
  - Credit/debit cards
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- Checking/savings accounts
- Point of sale payments
- Payments over the phone
- Mail
- On-line payment portal
- Automated payment plans

- Update each patient’s payment information at the front desk
- Payment plans – require a checking/savings account authorization to automatically debit the patients account
- Charge service fees for payment plans – this not only defers your costs but incentivizes the patients to pay you sooner.

** Follow Up Consistently on Unpaid Balances**

- Send bills punctually and regularly and make phone calls on unpaid bills
- Implement a collection process that includes steps based on the time and overdue amounts
  - consistent, no exceptions
- Establish system for reporting back from front office staff to billing or accounts staff
  - Notes on payment action to be taken by patient or collection action to be taken by billing staff
- Send bills and statements promptly and regularly
  - every account counts, no matter how small
- Make phone calls on unpaid bills past due
  - Start with greatest amounts due
- A collection policy for unpaid bills should accomplish the following
  - Remind the patient of the financial obligation for service that was provided
  - Determine the specific reason behind nonpayment, and
  - Discuss any problem that may be the reason for nonpayment with the patient and work out a solution
- Typical Collection Timetable
  1. Send a billing statement
  2. Send a letter reminding the patient that the bill is due
  3. Call the patient to secure a commitment of payment, to arrange a payment plan, to determine if the patient is able to pay, or to determine if the patient is dissatisfied with care
  4. Send a second letter reminding patient that payment has not been received
  5. Call the patient asking for a definite payment amount and date and solving any problems that may be presented
  6. Send the patient a final reminder letter with another follow-up call, if needed
  7. Turn the account over to collection agency if payment still has not been received and there is no known problem
- Spotting those accounts that are about to become delinquent
  - Patient by patient listing of those accounts which require collection follow up
  - An overall picture of the collection system’s effectiveness
  - An estimate of the real worth of the accounts receivable