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POLICY

This policy applies to the Johns Hopkins Health System (JHHS) Patient Financial Services (PFS) Division and the following entities: The Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH), Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center (JHBMC), and Howard County General Hospital (HCGH).

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for providing courteous responses to all telephone calls.

REFERENCES

JHHS Finance Policies and Procedures
Policy No. CUS005 – HIPAA: Verifying Identification

RESPONSIBILITY

Patient Financial Services Representative

PROCEDURE

1. Handling the telephone


- Learn the features of the phone.
- Keep in mind that speaking on the telephone requires better articulation than is necessary in face-to-face conversations.
- Avoid side conversations while talking on the telephone. Your party deserves your full attention.
- Make sure you place the caller on hold before you discuss his or her situation with a co-worker.
- Always ask the caller's permission before you place the call on hold.
- When transferring a call, advise the caller of the number to which they are being transferred, in case they are disconnected.

2. Use your best voice

- Always speak slowly and clearly.
- Put a smile into your voice.

3. Addressing the caller

The average caller may or may not be sensitive about how he or she is addressed. Keep these suggestions in mind:

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- When addressing a male, you are always correct to use “Mr.” or “Sir.” Addressing a woman is more confusing; the use of “Mrs.” or “Miss” is common and generally acceptable. Some women prefer “Ms.” and may request this form of address. If you are uncertain, simply ask the caller her preference: *Is it Mrs. or Miss? Is it Mrs. Taylor or Miss Taylor?*

The use of a caller’s first name is generally unacceptable unless:

- a. You have established a good rapport over a period of time
- b. You know the caller and know he/she is comfortable with a first-name basis

4. Answering the telephone

Use the four answering courtesies:

1. Greet the caller
2. State your department
3. Introduce yourself
4. Offer your help

Note: Pursuant to Policy CUS005 – HIPAA: Verifying Identification, you **must** verify that the caller is authorized to discuss the patient’s account *before you reveal any patient information.*

5. Effective Listening

Be aware that there are only three types of expressions you hear from callers:

- a statement
- an objection
- a question


Similarly, there are three things that can happen when you do **not** listen closely:

- You will hear what you want to hear
- You will hear what you expect to hear
- You will **not** recognize the difference between a statement, an objection, or a question

6. Managing different caller behaviors

Assertive/Demanding _____

- Listen, so you will understand the problem or concern

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- Be friendly but specific and direct in your statements
- Remain courteous

Angry _____

- Listen, so you will understand the problem or concern
- Relate—apologize in a general way
- Propose a plan of action that will solve the problem
- Stay calm and avoid getting involved in the customer's emotions
- Remain courteous

7. Closing the conversation

When you finish your telephone conversation, there are some appropriate and courteous statements you should make. You should:

- Thank the customer for calling.
- Provide assurance that any promises will be fulfilled.
- Leave the customer with a positive feeling.

8. Attitude


Attitude is the key factor in delivering quality customer service.

There are five important items about attitude that you should always remember:

- Your attitude toward customers influences your behavior. You cannot always camouflage how you feel.
- Your attitude determines the level of your job satisfaction.
- Your attitude affects everyone with whom you come in contact—either in person or on the telephone.
- Your attitude is reflected not only by your tone of voice, but also by the way you stand or sit, your facial expressions, and in other non-verbal ways.
- Your attitude is not fixed. The attitude you choose to display is up to you.

SPONSOR

Senior Director, Patient Financial Services, JHHS

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REVIEW CYCLE

Three (3) years

APPROVAL


 _____ 12/15/08
Senior Director, JHHS **Date**


 _____ 12/16/08
Director, PFS Operations, JHHS **Date**