

The NC resource for practice improvement and success

## Communicating Your Practices' COVID-19 Safety Response to Your Patients

During a healthcare crisis, active communication with patients is necessary to help the patients stay informed and safe. NC AHEC Practice Support has gathered some tips, examples, and resources to help you communicate with your patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What Should Be Communicated?	
Business Information	<ul> <li>Hours of Operation (if different from normal)</li> <li>A direct phone line or email address for COVID-19 related requests, if possible.</li> <li>Onsite versus virtual appointment information <ul> <li>What appointment types will be onsite versus virtual?</li> <li>Do patients have a choice if they prefer an onsite visit where a virtual visit might be recommended?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Update website to reflect change in practice policies and patient protocols.</li> </ul>
Pre-Arrival Check-In	<ul> <li>Details of when and how the practice will confirm an appointment.</li> <li>Information about what the patient should do if they have a fever or respiratory symptoms unrelated to their scheduled appointment. This should include procedure/ information related to getting tested and/or treated for COVID-19.</li> </ul>
Screening Upon Arrival	<ul> <li>Procedures for symptom screening immediately prior to onsite visits (e.g., vitals sta- tion)</li> </ul>
Changes to Visitor Policies	<ul> <li>Describe any changes to your practice's visitor policy.</li> <li>If your practice is not currently allowing visitors, clearly identify any exceptions to the "no visitors" rule (e.g. caretakers for patients who are incapacitated).</li> <li>If visitors need to sign-in due to contact tracing, explain that process.</li> </ul>
Required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul> <li>Do your patients need to wear a mask? If so, explain:</li> <li>What type of mask is acceptable</li> <li>Whether masks will be provided by the practice</li> <li>What type of PPE should they expect the clinical staff to be wearing?</li> </ul>
Social Distancing Measures	<ul> <li>Provide the process for checking in if it will be different than normal.</li> <li>Share what the patient should expect to see in the practice that might be different than usual (e.g. signage in chairs, areas closed off, Plexiglas barriers).</li> <li>Will physical contact (e.g. hugging, handshakes) be limited?</li> </ul>
Cleaning and Disinfecting	<ul> <li>Share what will get cleaned and disinfected, and how often. This can be limited to items that wouldn't normally get cleaned and disinfected, such as pens and clipboards.</li> </ul>
Links to Reputable Sources of Covid-19 Information	<ul> <li>Provide links to reputable sources of COVID-19 information, such as <u>NC DHHS</u> and <u>CDC</u></li> </ul>



NC AHEC PRACTICE SUPPORT

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### **General Tips for Communicating to Patients**

Provide patients with timely educational materials that are written in plain language (not medical jargon).

Proactively reach out to patients. Don't wait for patients to reach out to the practice for information. Use multiple communication channels to ensure information gets to patients. Consider your practice's website, social media, secure messaging via a patient portal, telephone (calls and texting), and postal mail. Use an automated communication platform (e.g. patient portal messaging) when possible. This allows for two-way communication and frees up practice resources. Take note of frequently asked questions, and add the answers to your regular communications or create an FAQ repository.

# **Examples of COVID-19 Patient Safety Communications**

- <u>COVID-19 Educational Videos in American Sign Language (ASL) -- CDC</u>
- Exam Room Posters Tideland Health
- Face Covering Instructions Tideland Health
- Floor Stickers Tideland Health
- <u>Safe and Ready to Serve You -- Beaumont</u>
- Safe Care Signage -- Beaumont
- <u>Safety Update for Patients and Visitors -- New York Presbyterian</u>
- <u>Steps to Safer Healthcare -- Baton Rouge General Physicians</u>



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### **Resources for Communicating About COVID-19 Beyond Physical Safety** COVID-19 Communication Resources -- Academy of Communication in Healthcare (ACH) • COVID-19 Communication Resources -- American Hospital Association (AHA) • COVID-19 Resources -- VitalTalk • How to Effectively Communicate with Patients During COVID-19 -- PatientPop Tips on Communicating with Your Patients During the COVID-19 Pandemic -- American Society for Repro-• ductive Medicine If you have questions or would like support on this topic please reach out to your local AHEC practice support team. We can help! NORTH CAROLINA AHEC REGIONAL PRACTICE SUPPORT CONTACTS Northwest Wake Area L AHEC AHEC AHEC AHEC CHRIS JONES SUZANNE LINEBERRY KELLY WISEMAN SHANNON CAMBRA (336) 713-7039 (336) 662-5810 (919) 350-0563 (252) 972-6958 cjones@wakehealth.edu zannelineberry@conehealth.com kwiseman@wakeahec.org shannon.cambra@arealah Mountain AHEC TAMMY GARRITY (828) 407-2104 tammy.garrity@mahec.ne Charlotte C AHEC ERIN CLOUTIER (704) 512-6052 Eastern Southern erin.cloutier@carolinashealthcare.org AHEC Regional AHEC ANGEL MOORE T NC AHEC PROGRAM OFFICE PRACTICE SUPPORT TEAM (252) 744-5221 DONNA BOWEN moorean@ecu.edu (910) 678-0119 DEBBIE GRAMMER CHRIS WEATHINGTON MONIQUE MACKEY donna.bowen@sr-ahec.org Director-Practice Support Deputy Director (919) 966-0801 QI Mana South East (010) 066-2401 (919) 445-3501 AHEC h\_gr JESSICA WILLIAMS MARY MCCASKILL CAROL STANLEY nation Manager Medicaid Trans/ (919) 966-0815 (910) 818-4371 (910) 667-9350 iessica.williams/aseahec.net mary\_mccaskill@ncahec.net carol\_stanley@ncahec.net VALERIE WILLIAMS GWEN ARNOLD Business Services Coordinator Outreach Coordinator (919) 445-3508 (919) 445-3504

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