

Good Samaritan Health & Wellness Center

Policies and Procedures

Subject: Phone Messages

Policy #: 5.8.1

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5.8.1 Clinical Advice by Telephone After Hours

Objective: *Good Samaritan has a written process and defined standards for providing access to after-hours clinical advice by telephone and continuity of medical record information, and regularly assesses its performance on providing and documenting after-hours clinical advice by telephone.*

Policy

It is the policy of Good Samaritan that patients have timely access to interactive clinical advice to communicate with a provider after hours in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

It is the policy of Good Samaritan that clinical advice by telephone after hours is communicated only to patients who are established as a Good Samaritan patient.

It is the policy of Good Samaritan that after-hours communications by telephone is performed and documented in a manner that is consistent with medical and legal prudence.

Procedure

Patients can seek and receive interactive clinical advice by telephone when the office is closed. Interactive means that questions are answered by an individual, not a recorded message.

Good Samaritan contracts with an outside vendor for afterhours messaging services, which includes responding to patients over the telephone to provide clinical advice and/or arrange care, during the hours of 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. (Note that messages received between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. may be responded to during the first hour of the following business day, depending on the nature of the message.) The outside vendor is subject to change pending vendor performance.

Patients are informed of the availability of an after-hours coverage service when they establish at Good Samaritan. This information is also made available through the Good Samaritan Brochure and, when applicable, in other Good Samaritan promotional efforts.

When patients call Good Samaritan after the usual operating hours, they hear a recording that informs them:

- Of the usual operating hours
- To call 911 for a medical emergency
- Of the telephone number for the answering service

Once the patient is connected to the answering service, the operator on duty at the answer service:

- Informs callers regarding usual business hours; if the patient wants to schedule or cancel appointments to call back during usual operating hours; all other calls are transferred to the provider.
- Obtains the caller's name, patient's full name, patient's date of birth, primary provider name and the reason for the call.
- Identifies the correct provider and pages him or her.

The provider contacts the patient within 30 minutes of receiving the page. The provider provides the patient with advice related to his or her needs. All communications are documented in the patient's record within 12 hours in a manner that is consistent with medical and legal prudence.

If there is no response to the operator's page within 20 minutes from the on-call provider, the operator:

- Re-pages the provider on call.
- Attempts to contact the on-call provider at home
- Reports unsuccessful attempts to Administration by secure email the next morning.

The answering service transmits the evening or weekend reports to the designated address prior to 7:30 a.m. each morning (Monday morning for weekends).

Quality Control

Good Samaritan monitors the policy and procedure in the following manner:

- Comprehensive review of 10 communications, per provider, by the Chief Medical Officer per annum. The appropriateness of the clinical advice, as well as the communication, is evaluated. All findings are reported to the provider, and the summary of results is documented in his or her personnel file.
- Quarterly review of the patient satisfaction data specifically measuring clinical advice by telephone and after-hours care.