

Tips for medical receptionists

Medical reception staff have an essential role in providing a positive customer service experience for all patients. These tips are helpful for reception staff who are supporting patients who are blind or have low vision.



Booking an appointment

When booking an appointment for a patient over the phone, check if they have any special requirements. The patient may disclose if they need anything on the day or before their appointment, allowing you to factor any additional time you may need to put aside for the patient.



Communication

- Talk to the patient directly. Never channel a conversation through a third person.
- Introduce yourself by stating your name and title. If you are leaving, let the patient know.
- When speaking with the patient, be yourself and act naturally.
- Don't avoid words like "see" or "look" or talking about everyday activities such as watching TV or videos. Use everyday language.



Paperwork and signatures

- Paperwork can be inaccessible to a patient who is blind or has low vision. Take a moment to read the documents to the patient. If the content is confidential, please share this information in a private setting.
- If a patient provides approval to any consent forms that require their signature, check if they would like you to guide their finger to the signature box.



Waiting room

- Check if the patient would like you to guide them to the waiting room or to a seat. If they do, offer the patient your elbow to hold onto.
- If the patient needs support with finding the waiting room, avoid saying 'over there'. Instead, describe where the room is. For example, 'behind you is the waiting room, and about three meters to your left is a row of vacant chairs.' Apply this advice when describing any critical features of a clinic, for example, onsite pharmacy, restrooms, etc.



Getting to the doctor's room

- Tell the doctor ahead of time that their patient is blind or has low vision and may require assistance to the consulting room, which will stop a patient from wondering where to go when a doctor expects the patient to see them and follow their lead.
- The doctor can offer their elbow, which the patient will accept if they prefer to be guided to the room.
- Some clinics use a numerical system to determine when to see a doctor rather than a patient's name. Tell the patient their number so that they know to listen out for it.



QR codes

QR codes have become part of everyday life. While QR codes are a convenient way for businesses and others to obtain information, they can be challenging for people who are blind or have low vision. Here are some suggestions to offer patients if they require support with signing in:

- Place the code on a flat surface instead of a vertical surface to check in.
- If the patient prefers to scan the code and would like to know where they can find the code, keep the instructions clear and straightforward. For example, 'the code is at three o'clock on the desk in front of you'. As the QR code requires exact scanning, supporting the patient to locate it is important. Alternatively, take a manual record of their information.