DENTAL COLLECTIONS
Get Paid and Maintain Patient Relationships
with 10 easy steps

Dental debt collection calls are a dreaded but necessary task that can be uncomfortable and awkward. If not done correctly, they can jeopardize important patient relationships. Help reduce anxiety about these calls, and make the experience a positive one for your staff and patients, by following these simple steps.

1. BEFORE CALLING, REVIEW THE BILL
   Be prepared to provide precise information about how much the patient owes, how much they have paid, and how long the bill has been past due.

2. UNDERSTAND THE PATIENT'S COVERAGE
   Did the patient's insurance cover the procedure? How much was their copay or deductible? Was the insurance denied or disputed?

3. SMILE WHEN YOU DIAL
   It may sound strange, but when you smile on the phone, the patient will hear it. Before you call, make sure to have a smile on your face. A pleasant tone will help build a positive rapport.

4. IDENTIFY YOURSELF AND THE PATIENT
   Clearly identify yourself, confirm you are speaking with the correct party on the line, and state the reason for the call.

5. ASK LEADING QUESTIONS
   Ask why the patient failed to make payment and if they are likely to miss payments in the future. Knowing this will make it easier to make a payment arrangement.

6. BE ASSERTIVE, NOT AGGRESSIVE
   Take control of the conversation. Create a sense of urgency about the bill. Ask HOW the patient would like to pay, not IF the patient would like to pay.

7. SELL THE PATIENT ON PAYING
   The key to debt recovery is convincing people they WANT to pay their past-due bill, as opposed to telling them they HAVE to pay.

8. SEND CONFIRMATION OF THEIR PAYMENT
   Send a summary of the payment arrangement, along with a hand-written thank you for their cooperation and continued business.

9. DOCUMENT THE CONVERSATION
   Document when you talked, who the call was with, and what arrangement was made. This will help for future reference if the account remains past-due.
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10

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, HIRE A COLLECTION AGENCY THAT CARES ABOUT YOUR PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS

IC System knows patient retention is extremely important to maintaining a successful and profitable dental practice, and retaining patients means keeping them happy. Here’s what to look for in a patient-friendly collection agency.

ETHICS
Make sure your collection agency has strong compliance management processes in place and is recovering your patient debt in an ethical, respectful, patient-friendly manner.

DENTAL EXPERIENCE
Does your agency have experience collecting for the dental industry? Will your collection agency’s debt collectors be able to speak intelligently to your patients about their bill or insurance?

PERFORMANCE
One of the easiest factors to consider when assessing your collection agency is their recovery rate. That is the percentage of dollars placed with your collections partner which are actually recovered and returned to you as revenue. Is your collection agency meeting your recovery expectations?

More importantly for patient retention, how does your agency perform on the phone? Are they generating too many patient complaints? Oftentimes patient relationships can be damaged by an overly aggressive collection agency or a dentist’s reputation may be tarnished by patient complaints. Having a consistent and reliable patient base is perhaps your practice’s most valuable asset and maintaining positive relationships even with your slow-paying patients is necessary in today’s competitive dental environment.

COMMUNICATION
As steps 1-9 indicate, it’s necessary to have great communication with your patients, but what about the communication between you and your collections partner? Do you have an open, transparent relationship with your collection agency? In fact, when was the last time you discussed past performance, strategy, and future goals with them? Does your agency understand your office’s unique philosophies, goals, and needs?

Does your agency offer easy-to-understand and timely reports on their collection activity? Do they respond to inquiries or requests within reasonable timeframes? Do you have access to real-time account statuses and can you measure and quantify your their performance with ease? These are all questions you should ask yourself when considering level of service your collection agency partner provides.

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