

OFFICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

CHECKLIST #4

HANDLING PATIENT COMPLAINTS PROPERLY

Patient satisfaction is an integral part of every clinical setting. Dissatisfaction with dental care may be a harbinger of malpractice litigation. When you receive a complaint about care, how you handle the situation may directly impact the potential for any future litigation. All dental practices should have a policy or protocol in place to address patient complaints.

	YES	NO
1. One individual has been identified and consistently used as the primary person to address patient complaints. This is often the office manager.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. All staff know to whom complaints should be addressed, as well as what information constitutes a complaint that requires attention or intervention by that person. This, at a minimum, includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written or verbal complaints regarding care • Billing or payment issues that involve concerns about the clinical care and • Letters of complaint from third party payors, NYS Departments of Health or Education, or other regulatory entities. Counsel is retained for assistance in formulating written responses to such agencies. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Effective communication skills are essential when addressing a patient complaint: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern for the patient’s condition and wellbeing is expressed • Communication is never adversarial or defensive • Active listening is used, and questions are asked when appropriate • Judgmental comments about patients and their families are avoided • Negative remarks about staff, dentists, or other providers are avoided • Complaints are investigated and follow up is performed as indicated 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Conversations with patients are documented in the record. The patient is quoted when documenting their concerns.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Letters of response to complaints are concise and simple. A copy of the written response is kept in the patient’s record.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. When complaints involve clinical issues or are complex, dentists or other providers are involved in addressing the situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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HANDLING PATIENT COMPLAINTS PROPERLY (continued)	YES	NO
7. Attorneys' requests for records may be an indication of a patient's unhappiness. The patient's record is reviewed in conjunction with these requests in an effort to assess the potential for litigation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Guidance is considered when presented with unusual or difficult situations. MLMIC staff is available to assist insureds with handling complaints, formulating responses, and determining potential exposure to claims of malpractice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Contact with MLMIC or our attorneys is never documented in the patient's record.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The attorneys at Fager Amsler Keller & Schoppmann, LLP are available to assist you in the proper handling of a patient complaint. They may be reached at **(855) FAKS-LAW** (855-325-7529).