

# Memorandum

To: Heads of Unit, Operations Managers, Divisional Directors, ASC Nursing and Administration Staff  
From: Bill Renwick and Gabriela Veliz  
Date: 12 November 2024  
Subject: Update to Adult Specialist Clinics Failure to Attend (FTA) Policy to align with the Department of Health's Managing Referrals to Non-Admitted Specialist Services Policy.

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Dear colleagues,

We have updated Western Health's Adult Specialist Clinics (ASC) Failure to Attend (FTA) Policy to align with the Department of Health's Managing Referrals to Non-Admitted Specialist Services Policy. The key change relates to when Western Health should remove the request for service to ensure optimisation of available appointments for all patients.

Currently 1 in 5 patients FTA their ASC appointment. Each time a patient fails to attend, an opportunity to offer an appointment to another patient is missed.

To support compliance with the Department of Health policy, Western Health should remove the request for service if the patient has:

- Not responded to two separate invitations made through their preferred method of communication to arrange an appointment
- Not accessed the tests or investigations that must be completed before the appointment on two consecutive occasions
- Failed to attend an arranged initial appointment on two consecutive occasions (except for correctional patients who have no control over their attendance at the appointment).

All units with clinics will need to meet these requirements, acknowledging that some already have this in place. Western Health will however continue to exercise discretion to avoid disadvantaging patients in cases of genuine hardship, misunderstandings and unavoidable circumstances.

To support adhering to these requirements, we have made significant improvements to patient communication regarding the notification of ASC appointments, including:

- Patient notification of appointment details when their appointment is made
- A second notification in 'Bing' message form two weeks before their appointment
- If the patient does not open the electronic letter attached to the 'Bing' message, a paper letter is generated
- A third notification in 'Bing' message form two days before their appointment

In addition, Western Health is now using Healthlink to reliably inform GPs of patients who fail to attend appointments. A process has also been established for GPs who are yet to transition to HealthLink.



Western Health

Adult Specialist Clinics  
Sunshine and Footscray Hospital

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By the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2024, the following will be applied for ASC patients:

## Urgent patients (Category 1):

- The treating clinician will contact patients who fail to attend. The treating clinician will complete the clinic outcome in the EMR. The ASC administrative team will action this as recorded.
- Patients who fail to attend for a second consecutive appointment will undergo a file review and assessment by the treating consultant or delegate. The treating consultant will complete the clinic outcome in the EMR. The ASC administrative team will action this as recorded, noting that the Department of Health recommends that the patient be discharged back to the care of the GP or referrer.

## Routine patients (Category 2 and 3)

- Patients who fail to attend their first appointment will be offered another appointment at a date allocated by the health service. The treating clinician will complete the clinic outcome in the EMR, and the ASC administrative team will action this as recorded.
- Patients who fail to attend their second consecutive appointment will be discharged. The treating clinician will complete the clinic outcome in the EMR. The ASC administrative team will action this as recorded, noting that the Department of Health recommends that the patient be discharged back to the care of the GP or referrer.

## All patients

- Patients can be discharged after one failure to attend at the discretion of the Head of Unit or treating clinician working within that clinic based on clinical assessment of referral information or any other information available in the patient's medical record. The treating clinician will complete the outcome in the EMR. The ASC administrative team will action this as recorded.
- The patient and the patient's GP are advised of failure to attend, and the patient is discharged back to the care of the GP.

Thank you for your ongoing support in meeting these requirements and improving patient access to ASC.

Please share this information with our respective teams and if you require any further information, don't hesitate to contact Brad McDougall, ASC Operations Manager – 0481 054 552 / [bradley.mcdougall@wh.org.au](mailto:bradley.mcdougall@wh.org.au)

Kind regards

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