

Instructions For Using a Sample Patient Termination Letter

Once the dentist-patient relationship has been established, it continues until it is properly terminated by either the dentist or the patient. The duty owed to a patient includes the responsibility to terminate the relationship in a proper manner, with proper notification. A patient termination letter provides the proper notification and reduces the risk of an allegation of patient abandonment.

Key Points

- The termination cannot be based on criteria that would violate federal, state, or local laws. For example, a patient should not be dismissed from a practice due to their age, race, sex, religion, disability, HIV status, or status in a protected class.
- Due care should be given to avoid dismissing the patient if the dismissal would significantly jeopardize their oral or systemic health status. Also, it is advisable to finish any multi-visit procedures you have started before dismissing the patient. (For example, cement the crown, finish the root canal, or deliver the partial denture.) Exceptions to these recommendations are when the patient presents a safety threat or has behaved egregiously toward the dentist and/or staff.
- A dentist's notification letter is generally not required to state a specific reason for terminating the dentist-patient relationship. However, some states may have specific requirements for patient notification. Check your state's dental practice act and applicable laws and rules.
- Printed copies of the letter should be sent out by the methods listed below.
- We also recommend that you send a copy of the letter via email if you have an email address for the patient. However, notification via email alone is not advised, as a patient could argue the email went to a spam or trash folder and they never saw it, and thus claim they were never properly notified.

Instructions

- COPY THE TEXT FROM THE SAMPLE LETTER ONTO YOUR OWN LETTER OR DENTAL OFFICE LETTERHEAD. DO NOT COPY THE DISCLAIMERS.
- The date of your letter should be the date you actually send the letters. This date will begin the window of offering emergency care.
 - States vary on the required length of emergency coverage offered. Most states require 30 days from the mailing date, not from the date of receipt by the patient.
- Print the letter. The dentist should sign the letter, not a staff member. Make two additional copies. Put the original in the patient's chart, either physically or a scan of it.
- Send one copy of the letter to the patient using US Postal Service certified mail, return receipt requested. The patient will have to sign for the letter, providing you with

verification of its receipt. Put the signature receipt in the patient's chart or electronic record with the copy of the original letter already there.

- Send the second copy of the letter via USPS first-class mail. The reason for sending two copies via different methods is that even if the patient refuses delivery of the certified letter at that address, or if the patient fails to go to the local Post Office to pick up the certified mail, we can presume that the first-class letter has been delivered.
- If you suspect that the patient may have changed addresses, it is recommended that you put the phrase "Address Correction Requested" in the lower left corner of the envelope. The US Postal Service will then provide you with any forwarding address.
- If you have an email address for the patient, attach the letter's electronic file to an email. We recommend you check the boxes for "Request delivery receipt" and "Request read receipt" before sending the email, if your email platform permits such actions.

If you are a PPP® insured and need additional assistance, please contact the PPP® Risk Management Support Line at 844-747-8543.

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