

Patient Communication Guidance

Can you contact a patient about their healthcare using the phone number(s) listed in our records?

- Yes, if a patient gives us a telephone number, you can assume within reason you are allowed to call it.

Can you leave a voicemail message if the patient does not answer your call?

- Yes, but only limited information is permissible when leaving a voicemail message.
- You may leave your name and callback number, but nothing more. Leaving anything more is both a privacy issue and potentially a patient safety issue.
- The following are examples of permissible messages: “This is Nurse Lindsay from ETSU Family Medicine, please give us a call at 12345678” or “This is Nurse Lindsay from ETSU Family Medicine, please give us a call at 1234567 or check your portal for additional information.”
- Leaving a message is not the same as successfully completing notification about whatever you might be calling about.
- Encourage patients to sign up for the patient portal for receiving results and safely communicating electronically.

Can you leave a message about the patient’s healthcare with an adult family member?

- No, it is both a privacy issue and potentially a patient safety issue to give lab results or leave other specific messages with another member of the family. Even if the person is listed on the HIPAA form, we have no way of ensuring the message will reach the actual patient.

Can you call in prescriptions to the patient’s pharmacy?

- Yes, you don’t need any special permission to send in prescriptions to the pharmacy on file.

Can you contact the patient via email?

- If the patient has completed the electronic communication authorization on the new patient paperwork by providing an email address and signing the authorization, then you may communicate with the patient via email.
- You should always double check the authorization has been signed and that there is no revocation of the authorization on file.

Can you contact the patient via text message?

- No, staff are not permitted to text patients.