



## Policy and Procedure

Policy Name:	Telephone Protocol when Staff Not Available & Monitoring After Hours System of How Clinic is Reached		
Effective Date:		Revision Date:	
Department(s)/Site(s):			
Document Owners:			
Approved By:			
Relevant Law/Standard:	California Department of Health Care Services under Title 22, California Code of Regulations, Section 53230. (Requires the review and certification of Primary Care Practitioner (PCP) sites.)  22 CCR §53855; 28 CCR §1300.67.1, §1300.80  Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) All Plan Letter 20-006, Site Reviews: Facility Site Review and Medical Record Review or any superseding APL		

**Purpose:**

Physician coverage is available and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Effective clinic office management supports the provision of appropriate, coordinated health care services during and after office hours.

**Policy:**

Telephone answering machine, voice mail system or answering service is used whenever office staff does not directly answer phone calls.

Staff ensures that the telephone system, answering service, recorded telephone information, and recording device are periodically checked and updated.

If your office has an after hour answering service, ensure that their staff members can speak languages other than English or ensure that they know how to connect to an interpreter over the telephone.

**Procedure:**

1. Call answered by a live voice (e.g. answering service or centralized triage):
  - If the caller believes the situation is an emergency, advise the caller to call 911 immediately, (or)
  - Proceed to the nearest Emergency Room or Urgent Care Center. Give the address of the emergency room or urgent care.
  - If the member indicates a need to speak with a physician, facilitate the contact with the

Physician by:

- Putting the caller on hold momentarily and then connecting the caller the on-call Physician, (or)
- Get the member's number and advise a physician will call them back within 30 minutes, (or)
- Giving the caller the pager number for the on-call physician and advising them to call back if they have not heard from the physician within 30 minutes.

*Note: If a member indicates a need for interpreter services, facilitate the contact by accessing interpreter services.*

2. Call answered by an answering machine:
  - If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 911 immediately. Hello, you have reached (Name of the Doctor/Medical Group). If you wish to speak with the physician on-call
  - Please hold and you will be connected to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - You may reach the on-call doctor directly by calling \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Please leave a message. The doctor will be paged, and you may expect a return call within 30 minutes
    - If you do not hear from the doctor within 30 minutes, please go to the Urgent Care Center, or the nearest Emergency Room, if an Urgent Care Center is not available.
  - Our urgent Care Center is located at \_\_\_\_\_.
    - [Appropriate language options should be provided for the location.]
3. Answering Machines/Answering Services/Centralized triage will be reviewed for accuracy and quality weekly, as well as, updated with any clinic hours, provider contact numbers and/or scheduling changes.

*Please find Sample After Hours Script at the end of this sample policy.*

_____	_____
First Name Last Name – Title	Date
_____	_____
First Name Last Name – Title	Date

The material in this document is a knowledge-sharing tool provided by the FSR team to enhance compliance with Facility Site Review requirements. All content is for informational purposes and may be used and/or modified according to site-specific practices. Ensure appropriate review and approval by site management prior to adoption.

## AFTER HOURS SAMPLE SCRIPT

One of the following scripts may be used by your medical group as a template for ensuring members have access to timely medical care after normal business hours.

### I. CALLS ANSWERED BY A LIVE VOICE (E.G. ANSWERING SERVICE OR CENTRALIZED TRIAGE):

If the caller believes the situation is an emergency, advise the caller to call 911 immediately.

If the caller believes the situation is an emergency, advise the caller to call 911 immediately or proceed to the nearest Emergency Room or Urgent Care Center. Give the address of the Emergency Room or Urgent Care.

If the member indicates a need to speak with a physician, facilitate the contact with the physician by:

- a) Putting the caller on hold momentarily and then connecting the caller the on-call physician, or
- b) Get the members number and advise a physician will call them back within the hour, or
- c) Giving the caller the pager number for the on-call physician and advising them to call back if they have not heard from the physician within one hour.
- d) If a member indicates a need for interpreter services, facilitate the contact by accessing interpreter services.

### II. CALLS ANSWERED BY AN ANSWERING MACHINE

If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 911 immediately.

Hello, you have reached (Name of the Doctor/Medical Group). If you wish to speak with the physician on-call,

- a) Please hold and you will be connected to (Provider Name) \_\_\_\_\_.
- b) You may reach the on-call doctor directly by calling \_\_\_\_\_.
- c) Please call \_\_\_\_\_. The doctor will be paged, and you may expect a return call within one hour. If you do not hear from the doctor within one hour, please go to the Urgent Care Center or the nearest Emergency Room if an Urgent Care Center is not available.
- d) Our urgent Care Center is located at \_\_\_\_\_.

[Appropriate language options should be provided for the location.]

**IMPORTANT: Effective telephone service after normal business hours provides for callers to reach a live voice or answering machine within 45 seconds.**