

OPERATOR INSIGHTS

presented by  ENSEMBLE
HEALTH PARTNERS

Breaking Out of a Pandemic POS Mindset Four Tips for Increasing POS Collections in the Post-Pandemic world

Many organizations paused point of service (POS) collections during the pandemic. As important as it is to develop new collection methods or strategies, getting POS collections back on track is critical.

Below are four insights on how to do just that.

1. Pause, Don't Stop

Collection conversations should still take place, but actual collections may happen at a later date (not necessarily during the patient's visit). If the facility has discontinued POS policies during the pandemic, we strongly encourage revisiting processes and monitoring restrictions carefully, so re-implementation happens as quickly as possible. **Any effort to make payments safe and easy for patients is likely to produce increased payments.** Work with your infection prevention teams to consider additional payment options, including:

- Use of a drop-box
- Placing cash or checks in a plastic bag
- Credit card payments collected via secure phone systems

Important note: while some payers have paused patient due liabilities, not all have. Some may also only cover COVID testing, not necessarily the full treatment. The key during this uncertain time is to help educate patients and provide them with resources as appropriate for your organization and state guidelines.

2. Collect with Compassion

While organizations may have paused collections to simplify processes and minimize patient contact during the pandemic, consider the importance of resuming collections to maintain financial vitality and long-term success. Patients continue to need a variety of healthcare services, including inpatient admissions, emergency, outpatient visits and lab testing. **Regardless of the reason for a patient's visit, collection efforts must resume and must be led with compassion.**

Many patients face a variety of concerns, whether it is their own healthcare or financial needs. Taking time to have the financial conversations, supporting financial advocacy for patients, and clearly outlining benefits prevents an unwelcomed surprise during a time with so many unknowns.

Demonstrating a sense of business as usual creates a positive expectation and experience for your patients.

3. Script Your Way to Success

A successful POS conversation results in payment and provides education to patients. Ensure associates recognize the opportunity to explain basic terms to the patient, including copays, family and individual deductibles, coinsurance, and family and individual out-of-pocket maximums. **It is critical that associates explain how the estimate was generated, as well as answer patient questions regarding financial responsibility.** Providing a copy of this estimate to the patient is a best practice for avoiding billing surprises later.

Preparing for a successful registration and POS collection starts with building trust and exuding confidence. Associates should introduce themselves being sure to include their name, department, the goal of registration, and review of financial responsibility. Give patients an opportunity to mentally process the financial impact, review the estimate, and ask questions.

Consider these sample scripts:



"Hi Mrs. Smith, my name is John and I have worked in our Registration Department for the past two years. I'll be asking a series of questions to get you registered today, and we will also be discussing your financial responsibility once I prepare an estimate for you."

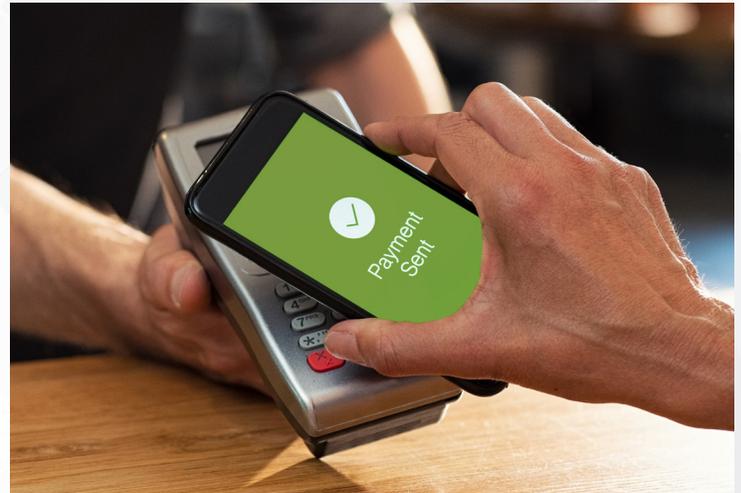
Once the estimate is delivered and explained:
"Mrs. Smith, have you considered what method of payment you would like to use today?"

1. If Mrs. Smith replies "No" or "I hadn't thought about making payment today"
 - "We accept cash, check, credit card, along with a few touch-to-pay options, such as Google and Apple Pay. I would be happy to process your payment for you today."
2. If Mrs. Smith replies "No, I can't afford it"
 - "We accept cash, check, credit card, along with a few touch-to-pay options, such as PayPal and Apple Pay. We also accept HSA and flex spending accounts. Are you able to pay any portion today?"
 - o This allows for the patient to pay something on the account, and they have been reminded of payments options they may not have considered.
 - o Collect the portion offered, issue receipt always, and **THANK Mrs. Smith for her payment**
 - o Share payment plan and available discounts as appropriate according to your facility and state guidelines
3. If Mrs. Smith shares she cannot afford to make ANY payment today
 - "Thank you, Mrs. Smith, for sharing this. I would be happy to help you with some additional information around payment plans and financial assistance policies."
 - o Discuss payment plans, screening for medical assistance, and charity care.
 - o Engage the local eligibility vendor, financial advocate/counselor, and ensure the patient is provided the financial assistance brochure and/or contact information.

4. Challenge the Status Quo

One of the biggest challenges organizations face, pandemic or not, is managing their POS collections. Fortunately, we can use this time productively by identifying future resources that will improve organizational performance and patient experience. Appropriate questions to ask are, what methods of payment are accepted, and how is the collection process managed?

Now is the time to develop strategies to broaden collection methods to include Apple Pay, Google Pay, PayPal, or other PCI Compliant platforms.



Final Thoughts

Research shows **74% of consumers are confused by Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) and medical bills**, and the confusion leads to a failure to pay. The financial health of patients and hospitals depend on clear explanations of financial responsibility, a variety of payment options, and associates acting with empathy to deliver an exceptional point of service experience. Taking these critical steps can be a differentiator that will lead to higher patient loyalty and long-term success.

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