

After-Hours Telephone Accessibility



The Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) Uniform Managed Care Contract sets standards Primary Care Providers (PCP) must follow so that patients can reach them by phone after their normal business hours. Superior audits PCP offices after hours to determine compliance with these standards. Here are the basics of the requirements to help you assess your current after-hours access system.

What meets the standards?

- A bilingual answering service, which can contact the PCP or another designated medical practitioner.
- Returning calls within 30 minutes.
- A bilingual answering machine message that directs the patient to call another number to reach the PCP or another provider designated by the PCP (not another message).
- Transferring the office telephone to another location where someone will answer the telephone and be able to contact the PCP or another designated medical practitioner, who returns calls within 30 minutes.

What doesn't meet the standards?

- The office telephone is not answered after office hours.
- The answering machine message tells patients to leave a message.
- The answering machine message is not bilingual (English and Spanish).
- The answering machine message instructs patients to go to an Emergency Room for any services needed.
- Returning after-hours calls outside of 30 minutes.