

# OUTPATIENT CLINIC CANCELLATIONS – MANAGEMENT POLICY®

## DOCUMENT SUMMARY/KEY POINTS

- This document outlines the process as well as information regarding the cancellation of outpatient clinics
- This is a network document and applies to Outpatients Clinics at both CHW and SCH
- A minimum of six weeks' notice must be given for all outpatient clinic cancellations except in extenuating circumstances
- This is a network document that outlines the process as well as information regarding the cancellation of outpatient clinics (both at CHW and SCH).

## CHANGE SUMMARY

- Due for mandatory review – no major changes

## READ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- All medical and non-medical staff who currently host clinics within the outpatients departments
- All support staff who have involvement in outpatients administrations and scheduling

<b>Approved by:</b>	SCHN Policy, Procedure and Guideline Committee	
<b>Date Effective:</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2021	<b>Review Period:</b> 3 years
<b>Team Leader:</b>	Nurse Manager	<b>Area/Dept:</b> Outpatients

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Notification to cancel an Outpatient Clinic</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Process for Managing Clinic Cancellations</b> .....	<b>4</b>
	Notifications with minimum six weeks' notice.....	4
	Notifications with less than six weeks' notice.....	4
<b>4</b>	<b>Special Circumstances</b> .....	<b>4</b>
	Cancellations with 24 hours or less notice.....	4
<b>5</b>	<b>Reallocation of vacant sessions after cancellations</b> .....	<b>5</b>
	<b>Appendix 1: Clinic Cancellation Flowchart</b> .....	<b>6</b>

## 1 Introduction

Outpatient services are a critical component of the patient's care pathway, integrating care between acute and primary health care. The Outpatients Departments prioritise patient-centred care in line with the SCHN vision of *Children First and Foremost*, consistent with Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN) and NSW Health strategies to deliver the right care, in the right place, by the right team, at the right time. The management of clinic cancellations is an important process in ensuring the delivery of:

- Optimal patient outcomes through a patient-centred approach: acknowledging that rescheduling appointments can have a significant impact on the lives of children and families (home/work/school) and can also lead to delays in clinical care
- Efficient utilisation of clinics: in order to meet the increasing demand and manage waitlists it is essential that clinics are optimally utilised by re-allocating vacated clinic sessions.

This policy adheres to National Standards for Quality Health and Safety (NSQHS) Standard One: Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations; and Standard Two: Partnering with Consumers.

## 2 Notification to cancel an Outpatient Clinic

All clinic cancellations require a minimum of six weeks' notice except in extenuating circumstances

- The following forms are available on the SCH and CHW intranet to request cancellation of a clinic:
  - CHW: [Changes or Cancellations to Clinic Sessions Form](#)
  - SCH: [SCH VMO and Staff Specialists Form](#)

In addition to submitting the form, a member of the clinical team must notify Outpatients Management directly. Notification is to be sent directly to the Outpatients Department Managers by email to:

- CHW: [schn-chw-outpatients@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-chw-outpatients@health.nsw.gov.au)
- SCH: [schn-sch-opd@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-sch-opd@health.nsw.gov.au)
- SCH AYA Bright Alliance: [schn-sch-ba-opd@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-sch-ba-opd@health.nsw.gov.au)

Only requests following the above process will be actioned (except for extenuating circumstances when an urgent cancellation is required – see **Special Circumstances** below)

### 3 Process for Managing Clinic Cancellations

The process for managing clinic cancellations is outlined in Appendix 1

#### Notifications with minimum six weeks' notice

- Cancellations will be actioned within three working days by the outpatients administration following receipt of the notification
- The requester will be informed via email that the cancellation has been actioned
- A record of cancelled clinics will be maintained by outpatients management to monitor cancellation rates and reallocation of sessions

#### Notifications with less than six weeks' notice

- Except in extenuating circumstances, clinicians must provide a minimum of six weeks' notice to cancel or reschedule clinic sessions
- The following process will be followed for cancellations with less than six weeks' notice:
  1. Requester (Consultant / clinic lead) is to notify Outpatients Administration via the email/online form in section 2 of this policy
  2. Outpatients Management (or their delegate) will forward the notification to the appropriate Department Head or Clinical Program Director (CPD) for their information, direction and negotiation of resources to either continue the clinic or proceed with the cancellation/reschedule of the clinic (this notification will occur within 24 hours of the initial request)
  3. After approval from the Department Head / CPD (within 24 hours of notification), the clinic will then be rescheduled to a negotiated date as per the clinician/s' availabilities
  4. Outpatients administration will be responsible for contacting families and negotiating a date for a rescheduled clinic appointment
- A record of cancelled clinics will be maintained by outpatients management to monitor cancellation rates and reallocation of sessions

### 4 Special Circumstances

#### Cancellations with 24 hours or less notice

- If a clinic is required to be cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, direct communication with Outpatients Management (or their delegate) must be made to:
  - Inform of reason for cancellation
  - Discuss options and confirm a plan to minimise impact on patients
- Wherever possible, an alternative Consultant or Registrar should be allocated to review patients to minimise the number of patients requiring to be rescheduled

- If an alternative Consultant or Registrar is unavailable to continue the clinic, the patients will be reallocated to the next available appointment or as discussed with the Consultant
- The plan will be confirmed in writing via email to the requester, Department Head and relevant CPD
- Outpatients administration will endeavour to reschedule the clinic and reallocate patients where appropriate; this will include working with department secretaries to contact affected families to inform them of the change with as much notice as possible
- If staff are unable to contact a family an alternative clinician will need to be contacted to review the patients that may arrive
- In the event that there is a patient safety concern due to clinical need, or likelihood of an escalating complaint, the CPD CARPA and Director Clinical Operations (DCO) will be informed for noting or advice

## 5 Reallocation of vacant sessions after cancellations

- Wherever possible, vacant sessions will be reallocated to other services to optimise utilisation and manage waitlists
- Requests for additional clinics should be forwarded:
  - CHW: [schn-chw-outpatients@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-chw-outpatients@health.nsw.gov.au)
  - SCH: [schn-sch-opd@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-sch-opd@health.nsw.gov.au)
  - SCH AYA Bright Alliance: [schn-sch-ba-opd@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:schn-sch-ba-opd@health.nsw.gov.au)
- Requests should include:
  - Date and time for additional clinic
  - Number of rooms required
  - Clinicians who will be attending and any clinic requirements
- Requests will be prioritised based on clinical priority and waitlist
- Outpatients administration will confirm availability or suggest alternatives where possible

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## Appendix 1: Clinic Cancellation Flowchart

