

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for expressing your concern about our practice's **policy regarding charges for “no shows”, missed appointments or appointments cancelled in less than 24 hours** (all lumped together as “patient missed appointment” on your bill). We realize that other doctors, especially non-mental health providers may not routinely charge for these missed appointments. For psychiatrists and other mental health professionals this is a widely accepted practice. We would like to let you know why we developed this policy.

Our practice is based on making appointments that reflect the actual time we will be spending with patients. Usually this is somewhere between fifteen minutes and an hour, depending on the service provided. This time is scheduled to be your time and we work to be on time and devote this time to you. (We are aware that sometimes there may be waits due to unforeseen issues with patients earlier in the day. We hope you can see this as efforts we take on behalf of those that need our attention at the time. And the same will be shown to you if the need arises.)

We do not “double book” appointments. Some doctors, especially primary care or pediatric doctors, see large numbers of patients in a day and make their schedule with the assumption that there will be occasional “no shows”. They may schedule 20 or more patients for an afternoon. If one or two patients miss their appointment the doctors are still busy seeing the other patients. On the other hand, we may schedule only four or five patients in an afternoon. One “no show” results in significant unused time for us. The alternative is to double book which would result in long and unpredictable waiting room times of an hour or more, something we are reluctant to do.

As you may know there are frequently long wait times to get an appointment with us (due to an undersupply of child and adolescent psychiatrists both regionally and nationally). If we don't receive at least 24 hour notification about cancellations we are not able to fill in those open appointment times with someone who may be on a waiting list in case of cancellations.

The policy is applied to all “no shows” and only in extenuating circumstances will we be able to cancel the missed appointment charge. If you think you have an unusual circumstance and would like to appeal your ‘no show’ charge, please mail us a detailed written account of the situation for our review. We are unable to handle these requests by phone call. We also prefer not to take your child's therapy time to deal with these billing issues during sessions, so we ask that you mail your request to us so our group can review your concerns in a consistent, professional manner.

We will continue to work to decrease the number of missed or forgotten appointments by calling patients and/or families to remind them of upcoming appointments. We use an automated reminder system as a courtesy but the responsibility of keeping appointments remains with you. If there are other reminders you would prefer we will look to see if that might be a practical option.

We hope this information is helpful. We realize it does not eliminate your concern about the charges, but we hope your understanding of the issue is increased.

Sincerely,
The Doctors at CAPA