

2024 RISK MANAGEMENT RESOLUTIONS



It's that time again, when you may be thinking about resolutions for the new year. While termination has always been a popular topic on our Risk Management Helpline, during the past year we have addressed more termination issues than ever before. It's an important topic because once a treatment relationship has been established, the psychiatrist remains responsible for the patient's care until the treatment relationship has been terminated. Accordingly, our suggested easy-to-implement risk management resolutions are focused on termination of the treatment relationship.

1. Discuss the need to terminate with patients, if possible, and utilize the termination process when terminating with active patients. This consists of:

- Providing notice – most states require 30 days of coverage to allow the patient to find a new provider.
- Reviewing treatment recommendations and educating the patient on clinical issues, such as any risks of stopping medications abruptly.
- Providing referral resources. You are not required to place the patient with a new psychiatrist, but rather you need to provide referral resources. One useful resource is the APA's "Psychiatrist Finder" (<https://finder.psychiatry.org/>) that patients can use to find a new psychiatrist.
- Sending a letter, documenting the termination discussion. Our termination resource has a model letter that you may find useful. The goal is to have the letter reach the patient, so if mailing it, consider sending it via delivery confirmation. If sent by email or patient portal, try to obtain proof that it was opened.
- Forwarding records to the patient's new psychiatrist upon request.

2. Avoid prescribing large amounts of medications around the time of termination.

You are responsible for the medications you prescribe, so you should only prescribe enough medication to get to the termination date. This is true even if a smaller prescription increases the cost to the patient.

3. If you are a contracted provider with any health plans, review and be familiar with termination provisions in all of your provider contracts. Some health plans require their contracted physicians to provide a specific amount of notice to patients prior to terminating.

4. Periodically review your patient roster to identify patients who have fallen out of treatment.

For those patients who have been lost to follow-up, consider sending a letter to determine whether they want to continue in treatment. Our termination resource has a model letter you may find useful when composing these letters.

***PRMS Termination Resource:** www.prms.com/media/2226/rm_0191-termination.pdf

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