

PRACTICE POLICIES, STATEMENTS & GUIDELINES

40-8 Guidelines for Departure from a Medical Practice

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Purpose: To provide guidance regarding the departure from a medical practice.

POLICY: It is the position of the Colorado Medical Board ("Board") that due care should be taken when departing from a medical practice, to ensure a smooth transition from the current Colorado Medical Board licensee ("provider") to the new treating provider or other healthcare practitioner. This should occur with a minimum of disruption in the continuity and quality of medical care being provided to the patient.

During such times, providers and other parties that may be involved in such processes must consider how their actions affect patients. In particular practitioners have the following obligations:

Permit Patient Choice

It is the patient's decision from whom to receive care. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all providers and other parties that may be involved to ensure that:

- Patients are notified of changes in the practice. This is often best done by letter to patients who are currently, or have recently been under the provider's care, and should explain the changes in the practice, and the final date of practice;
- In accordance with the requirements of Section 12-36-140, C.R.S, patients are advised as to where their medical records will be stored, and how they may access those records;
- Patients are advised as to how to reach the provider(s) or other health care practitioner(s) remaining in the practice; and,
- Patients clearly understand that the choice of health care provider is the patients'.

Providers continue to have obligations toward patients during and after departure from a medical practice. Providers may not abandon a patient or abruptly withdraw from the care of a patient. Therefore, patients should be given reasonable advance notice to allow their securing other care.

Good continuity of care includes preserving, keeping confidential, and providing appropriate access to medical records. If patients choose to leave the practice and seek care elsewhere, allow considerable time for patients to request that their records be copied and forwarded to the new treating provider or healthcare practitioner. (See Board Policy regarding retention and release of medical records.) Also, good continuity of care may often include making appropriate referrals. The provider(s) and other parties that may be involved should ensure the requirements for continuity of care are effectively addressed.

Notifying Other Parties

In addition to notifying patients, there are other parties who will need to know of the change in your practice. Contact:

- the Medical Board office to update your address of record;

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- your malpractice insurance carrier to advise them of the change in your practice status;
- any managed care organizations which have not already been advised; and,
- provider membership organizations (e.g. AMA, AOA, CAPA, specialty societies) may also want to know of the change in your practice status.

No provider, group of providers, or other parties that may be involved should interfere with the fulfillment of these obligations including, but not limited to, those obligations to permit patient choice. Providers should not put themselves in a position where they cannot be assured these obligations will be met.

In the event that a provider leaves a practice, the practice or the departing provider should provide adequate notice to all patients regarding the provider's departure.