

After-Hours Medical Concerns: Communicating Steps for Families to Follow

What should families do when they have urgent concerns about their children after normal office hours? How can providers provide this information most effectively and use it as a means to solidify the medical home?

While connecting with their PCP is preferable before heading to the emergency room or urgent care, families may not be aware that this is an option. Providing the following “3-Steps for After-Hours Communication” could be helpful.

Step 1 – Make sure that after-hours instructions are front and center on the practice website. Use language and direction that is clear and inviting.

Step 2 – Provide a voicemail and answering service script that is inviting and encouraging, such as “We are here for you after hours. Don’t hesitate to call.”

Step 3 – As families leave your office, provide them with the confidence and procedure for checking in after hours. Consider distributing a handout or business card with the practice phone number and procedure for speaking with the call center.

The goal is to make sure that families include the medical home in their decision-making, see their PCP as an important part of the decision-making process even after hours, and avoid needless trips to the emergency room.