

Customer Service

Prepared by Prishita Vora – Healthcare Operations Consultant

Healthcare Customer Service & Patient Handling Guide

Building Trust, Respect, and Consistency in Every Patient Interaction

1. PROFESSIONALISM: THE FIRST LAYER OF PATIENT TRUST

Professionalism begins before any words are spoken. Patients form impressions within seconds.

Standards:

- Staff uniforms are clean, well-fitted, and wrinkle-free
- Grooming is neat and appropriate for a clinical environment
- ID badges are visible, above the waist, and facing forward
- Staff arrive on time and are prepared for duty
- Handovers between staff are structured and uninterrupted
- Clinical and non-clinical areas are clean and organised
- Staff posture, tone, and body language reflect confidence and calmness

Key Principle:

A professional environment signals safety, competence, and control.

2. COMMUNICATION: THE LANGUAGE OF RESPECT

Patients often feel anxious, uncertain, and vulnerable.

Your communication restores dignity and trust.

Standards:

- Patients are addressed as "Sir," "Ma'am," or by formal name
- Casual terms such as "dear," "sweetie," or first names are avoided unless invited
- Tone remains calm, respectful, and clear at all times
- Staff maintain eye contact and active listening
- Staff do not interrupt or rush patient responses
- Instructions are explained in simple, non-medical language
- Patients are always given the opportunity to ask questions

The 10/5 Rule (Mandatory Standard):

- At 10 feet → Make eye contact and smile
- At 5 feet → Greet the patient verbally

This applies to every patient, every time

Key Principle:

Patients remember how you spoke to them more than what you said.

3. STRUCTURED COMMUNICATION: THE A.I.D.E.T FRAMEWORK

AIDET ensures consistency across all staff interactions, reducing anxiety and improving patient experience.

A – Acknowledge

- Make eye contact immediately
- Smile and acknowledge the patient's presence
- Acknowledge anyone else in the room (family, caregiver)

No patient should ever feel ignored

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I – Introduce

- State your name clearly
- State your role and department
- Clarify what you will be doing

Example:

"My name is [Name], I'm the nurse on duty today. I'll be taking your vitals."

Patients should never have to guess who you are

D – Duration

- Clearly communicate waiting times or procedure duration
- Provide updates if delays occur
- Set realistic expectations

Example:

"The doctor will see you in approximately 15 minutes."

Uncertainty creates anxiety – clarity reduces it

E – Explanation

- Explain what you are doing before you do it
- Use simple, non-technical language
- Check for understanding

Example:

"I'm going to take your blood pressure now. It may feel slightly tight, but it will only take a few seconds."

Ask: "Do you have any questions?"

Patients fear what they don't understand

T – Thank You

- Thank the patient for their time and cooperation
- Acknowledge their patience
- Close the interaction respectfully

Example:

"Thank you for your patience today. We appreciate you choosing our facility."

This reinforces respect and builds loyalty

4. PATIENT HANDLING STANDARDS (WHAT STAFF MUST DO)

- Knock before entering patient spaces
- Introduce yourself before any interaction
- Explain purpose before beginning any task
- Maintain eye contact during conversations
- Respect patient privacy and dignity at all times
- Do not discuss patient information in public areas
- Ensure patient comfort during procedures

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5. WHAT TO AVOID (CRITICAL ERRORS)

- Ignoring patients at reception or in corridors
- Speaking to colleagues while patients are waiting
- Using casual or dismissive language
- Performing procedures without explanation
- Focusing on devices (computers/phones) over the patient
- Displaying frustration or impatience
- Leaving patients without clear next steps

6. SERVICE RECOVERY (WHEN THINGS GO WRONG)

- Acknowledge the issue immediately
- Listen without interrupting
- Apologise appropriately
- Take ownership or escalate quickly
- Provide a clear resolution or next step
- Follow up where necessary

7. KEY PRINCIPLE

Healthcare is not only about treatment.
It is about how that treatment is experienced.

FINAL NOTE

Consistency in communication and behaviour across all staff is what transforms a facility from:

Functional
to
Professional
to
High-performing

If your team is not trained on these standards, patient experience will always feel inconsistent.

For staff training and operational support, contact:

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