

## Considerations When Utilizing AIDET Plus the Promise<sup>SM</sup> by Phone

In telephone conversations, verbal communication skills are extremely important. So much of our message is lost when we cannot rely on the visual cues of body language and facial expression. Standardizing the content of telephone communication with AIDET Plus the Promise<sup>SM</sup> can fill some of that gap.

When we answer the phone, it's important to remember that the person calling needs to be sure right away they have reached the right place and the right person. We can help with that by identifying ourselves and our area clearly as soon as we answer – “Good morning, North Country HealthCare. This is Maya. How can I help you?” This represents **acknowledgement** and **introduction**.

**Explanation** by phone is even more important than it is in person, due to the lack of facial expression and body language that can assist us in conveying a message. These tips can help:

- Be sure you're speaking slowly and clearly enough.
- If you're giving specific instructions (an address or phone number, pre-visit instructions, steps to solve a problem, et cetera), ask if the person has a way to take notes ready before you begin.
- Ask, “what questions do you have?” or “what can I answer for you?” after the explanation is complete. Remember that, “do you have any questions?” can carry the message of, “you don't have questions, right?” if we're not careful!
- Ask, “what else can I do for you?” or “what else can I help you with?” before ending the call.

Although you may not need to communicate a specific **duration** on every phone call, there are times when you will use this part of AIDET®. For example:

- “Please plan to arrive 10-15 minutes before your appointment time to complete the new patient paperwork.”
- “I'd expect Dr. Martinez should be able to return your call by 4:00 this afternoon. Is that okay?”
- “It should take us about 20 minutes to walk through this process. Do you have that time available now?”

You can – and should! – **manage up** and utilize “**the promise**” on the phone. Here are some ways to do that:

- “Good morning, North Country HealthCare. This is Maya. ***I can help you.***”
- “I know you haven't seen Dr. Martinez before, so I want to let you know ***she's fantastic – very reassuring and thorough.***”
- “I'd like to transfer you to Jackie. ***She has a lot of experience with this and she'll be able to help!***”

Just as we would in person, it's important to **thank** our patients and colleagues when communicating by phone. Here are a few simple examples:

- “**Thank you** for holding...”
- “**Thanks** for calling!”
- “**I appreciate** your help.”

Other tips and things to keep in mind:

- If you need to place someone on hold, always ask first (“may I place you on a short hold?” or similar). Make sure you wait for their answer and thank them before pressing the hold button.
- When you come back to someone who has been holding, thank them again (“thank you for holding” or similar).
- If the hold time will be longer than expected, connect back with the patient, thank them for holding, apologize for the wait, and – if possible – offer them the option to continue holding or be called back. If they opt for the call-back, give them an approximate time when you expect that to happen – no one likes waiting by the phone!
- Just like with in-person AIDET Plus the Promise<sup>SM</sup>, it's important to make things sound like how you talk! See the chart below for some ideas.

Instead of:	You could use:
“Good morning, North Country HealthCare. This is Maya.”	“Hi, this is North Country HealthCare; this is Maya.” “Hello, North Country HealthCare. Maya speaking.” “North Country HealthCare. This is Maya. Good morning!”
“How may I help you?”	“How can I help you?” “I can help you.” “What can I do for you today?” “How may I help?”
“May I place you on a short hold?”	“May I ask you to hold for a moment/few minutes?” “Do you mind holding briefly?” “Is it okay if I put you on a short hold?”
“Thank you for holding.”	“Thanks for holding!” “Thanks for waiting.” “I appreciate your patience...”

Remember the goal of AIDET Plus the Promise<sup>SM</sup> is to reduce anxiety, thereby increasing compliance and outcomes, whether those outcomes are clinical or non-clinical. When people feel safe with us, they are more likely to listen, to follow instructions, to return for care and information when they need to, and to be calm and receptive. We can and should utilize this skill everywhere!

