



Appendix 5.10

Accessible MDE Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of sample frequently asked questions that staff or clinicians may ask about accessible medical diagnostic equipment (MDE).

1. Why do patients with disabilities need different (accessible) MDE?

Inaccessible MDE prevents patients with disabilities from receiving healthcare. Because of this, patients with disabilities experience lower rates of preventive screenings, increased rates of delaying or avoiding care, and, ultimately, significantly worse health outcomes. Accessible MDE is not only legally required, but critical for delivering high-quality care to patients with disabilities.

Consider a patient who uses a wheelchair at their annual physical exam. Clinic staff are unprepared to safely transfer them onto the exam table, and even though patients are normally laying down when examined, their doctor examines them in their chair. Following the exam, they're referred for a mammogram, but because the clinic does not have a height-adjustable mammography unit, they receive a less accurate screening. A height-adjustable exam table and height-adjustable mammography unit would have ensured this patient could access their care.

2. What if a patient requests equipment that our organization doesn't have?

First, acknowledge the patient's request and your intention to ensure that they can access their care. Apologize that the specific equipment they've requested is not available, and tell them what other equipment or accommodations you have that might meet their needs.

If you do not have equally effective methods to provide their care, have referrals ready to nearby clinics that do have the equipment. Note the equipment request and let the appropriate people in your organization (e.g., program managers, disability coordinator, quality, safety, patient relations, facilities) know of the request.

3. What if a patient's need for accessible MDE isn't identified until the appointment, and the equipment is already in use by another patient?

Patients' accommodation and equipment needs should be asked ahead of the visit to ensure the patient is either scheduled where the equipment is located or the equipment can be reserved during their appointment time.

However, if this is not asked or the patient did not report their need, estimate the wait time for the accessible equipment and ask the patient if they are able to wait for it to become available. If not, offer to reschedule at the earliest possible time the equipment is available. If necessary to reschedule, ensure the patient is not charged for the current appointment and the current appointment is not listed as a no show or late cancellation.

4. Are staff required to assist with transferring patients to accessible MDE?

Yes. If a patient requires assistance, staff must help the patient safely transfer to exam tables, chairs, scales, and other equipment. Healthcare organizations may not require a patient to bring someone to assist them during their visit to access the care and services provided. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act's regulations, organizations, "must ensure their staff are able to successfully operate accessible MDE, assist with transfers and positioning of individuals with disabilities, and carry out the program access obligation regarding existing MDE."¹ Before assisting the patient, *a/ways* ask how they would like to be transferred and moved.

5. Is it ever okay for a patient to remain in their wheelchair, mobility device, or chair for their appointment?

If you would not typically require a patient to transfer to a table, scale, or other equipment for the particular care delivered during the appointment, a patient may remain in their mobility device. If certain MDE is not critical to care delivery or positioning, you may ask the patient how they would prefer to receive care. If you decide not to transfer the patient, communicate this to the patient, explaining why you think you can provide the same quality of care and exam while they are seated.

Reference

1. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Qualified staff. 45 CFR §84.94. 2024. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/section-84.94>