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## “May I Bring Your Attention Back to Collections?” Part One

Ha! That’s a sentence I seem to use often. Creating production is awesome, but we must have the systems in place to collect what we are owed.

Here are a few tips, with more to come next month.

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**1. Collections are a lot like training:** if it isn’t scheduled, it doesn’t happen. I’d block time, mid-morning, at the beginning of the week (let’s say three hour stretches on Tuesday and Wednesday) on the schedule for your collections person to leave the front desk and make calls or do other activity related to accounts. This can also be a time when you train or focus on verbal acuity and the right way to ask for overdue monies. Set the time aside because it’s too frenetic at the front desk to collect, check patients in/out, and handle busy phone lines.

**2. I always suggest using a 1-31 file to manage overdue account balances.** If someone promises to pay by a certain date, I place a note in the next day’s date section to call them if the payment has not arrived. Late payers assume you will forget! And if you don’t have a system – you WILL.

**3. Even if we aren’t formally extending credit, we must follow the Fair Credit Act.** We must be clear on financial expectations \*in writing\*, and we can’t threaten patients with adverse action without first having our policies clearly stated and accepted.

**4. Fair warning: your signed treatment plan is not court worthy.** If you plan on using the court system to capture unpaid funds, any judge will require a clear picture of financial understanding between you and the patient. Simply signing a treatment plan as an acknowledgement is not a guarantee that the law will land on your side. Please note **IF** anything deviates (treatment-wise, as in added or subtracted procedures) the signed document is not reflective of what happened on the day of service. We must show that the patient understood the balance owed on delivered procedures.

**5. Using a signed Financial Agreement sets your office up for success.** Set a floor limit to administer one – most offices start with balances of \$500 or more.

Next month we’ll talk about changing the way you communicate about payment expectations, and how to roll out your requirements to every patient.

Until next time!

Angie

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Angie Skinner is a nationally recognized Coach, speaker and author, specializing in dental practice profitability. She is a member of the National Speakers Association, and a Continuing Education provider through the AGD's P.A.C.E program. [Email Angie](#) [About Angie](#)

