

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Clarifying Recent Changes to Walk-In and Urgent Care Visits

Iliuliuk Family and Health Services (IFHS) would like to address recent questions and concerns regarding the updated process for walk-in visits and how certain visits are billed.

First, thank you to our community. We know how much Unalaska depends on reliable, accessible healthcare, and we understand that any change to how care is delivered can create uncertainty. Our goal is always to communicate clearly and support every patient who walks through our doors.

Why this change was made

When a patient arrives without an appointment, our clinical team must evaluate the situation based on medical need and urgency. Under federal billing rules for Federally Qualified Health Centers, visits must be billed according to the level of care provided and the medical necessity documented during the visit.

This means:

- If a patient needs urgent, time-sensitive evaluation, the visit must be billed as an urgent care service.
- If the patient's needs are appropriate for a same-day appointment, our front desk will offer that option whenever possible.

This approach ensures that billing accurately reflects the care delivered and that IFHS remains compliant with federal program requirements.

For many years, IFHS has absorbed significant financial losses by providing high-acuity, unscheduled care without the ability to bill for it appropriately. Aligning our processes with medical necessity and billing rules helps protect the clinic's long-term sustainability and supports our ability to recruit and retain providers in a remote community.

What has not changed

- Walk-ins are still accepted. Patients who arrive without an appointment will continue to be seen based on medical need.
- Same-day appointments remain available when appropriate. If your needs can be met through a same-day appointment, our team will help schedule one.
- No one is turned away for inability to pay. Our sliding fee scale and financial assistance programs remain in place.

What this change improves

- Faster access for urgent needs. Patients requiring immediate attention can be triaged and treated more quickly.
- More predictable scheduling for routine care. Vaccines, blood pressure checks, and other routine services are easier to plan and staff when scheduled in advance.
- Better support for our clinical team. Providers have been seeing extremely high patient volumes — often 40–50 patients before noon. This change helps ensure they can safely manage both urgent and routine care.

You are invited to participate

IFHS board meetings are open to the public, and we welcome your questions and feedback. The next board meeting will be held on Thursday, March 12th at 5:30 pm in the upstairs conference room at the clinic. You can see the schedule for 2026 Board of Directors meetings on our website: <https://ifhs.org/board-of-directors/>

Our commitment

We remain dedicated to providing high-quality, compassionate care to every person in Unalaska. These changes are part of a broader effort to strengthen healthcare access, support our staff, and ensure that IFHS can continue serving this community for decades to come.

Thank you for your patience, your understanding, and your partnership.

Iliuliuk Family and Health Services, Inc.