

Guidelines at a Glance



A well-ordered referral process can deepen the trust that your clients have in your practice, and ultimately, keep them coming back to you. Studies have shown that timely referral for a patient's condition can:



Extend survival time



Improve quality of life



Increase clients' positive perceptions

In one study by the Collaborative Care Coalition, client perceptions were six times more likely to improve after a referral, and clients valued their referring veterinarian's continued involvement and willingness to work with other veterinary professionals.

The *AAHA Referral Guidelines* help veterinary practices leverage the latest technology and communication strategies for smooth referrals. By centering the pet and family's experience and emphasizing collaborative communication, these guidelines offer a roadmap that can take you through even the most complex referral cases.

Learn more about collaborative care strategies that create the best experiences for your patients and clients in the *AAHA Referral Guidelines*, available at aaha.org/referral.

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3 Takeaways



There are general collaborative conversations, professional-to-professional consultations, and hands-on referrals.



A dedicated **web-based portal** can improve referral case communication by providing **shared access to medical records**, completed and pending diagnostics, and patient updates (check out the example in the Referral Guidelines).



The primary care team's **ongoing involvement** with the client and pet during the referral is a **top predictor of a client's positive feelings** toward the referral process.

2 Actions



To avoid duplication of tests and procedures:

- Document and communicate with the specialty care team about any completed and/or pending tests and procedures.
- Set client expectations that the specialty care team may need to repeat some diagnostic and monitoring tests.



To keep communication flowing smoothly between primary care and specialty care teams:

- Designate single points of contact
- Set expectations for follow-up care
- Leverage technology for transparency, record sharing, and collaborative case management

1 Thing to Never Forget



Discuss the process with the client, including referral care cost estimates. In many instances (e.g., internal medicine, dentistry, surgery cases), the primary care team may not be able to provide accurate estimates prior to the specialist's assessment. Normalizing conversations about cost and providing at least the referral fee and any other expected tests/procedures will help clients deal with the potential stress of finding out about referral costs.