

Metric Spotlight: Cancellations



Why Cancellations Happen

Understanding *why* cancellations occur helps distinguish between what's preventable and what's simply predictable. Tracking patterns over time allows your practice to respond with smarter policies, scheduling changes, client engagement strategies, and targeted clinician support.

Cancellations rarely have a single cause — they often reflect an intersection of factors across clients, clinicians, and systems.

1. Client Factors

The most common and often most visible causes of cancellations:

- **Life logistics:** Work, school, childcare, transportation, or health issues that make consistent attendance difficult.
- **Financial stress:** Strain, insurance changes, or copay fatigue that increase cancellations.
- **Engagement level:** Clients may cancel when ambivalent about therapy or the therapist, or when they sense inconsistency in clinician attendance.
- **Readiness for change:** Early cancellations in treatment may indicate uncertainty about goals or readiness for therapy.
- **Perceived value:** Clients who don't yet see consistent therapy as beneficial may deprioritize it.

2. Clinician Factors

- **Communication clarity:** Inconsistent or unclear policies around session frequency, consistency or cancellation fees can lead to lack of client awareness.
- **Clinician reliability:** When clinicians don't consistently show up — due to illness, lateness, frequent rescheduling, or general inconsistency — clients often internalize that same message. Over time, they may believe attendance isn't essential or that flexibility is the norm. This *models* cancellation behavior and reinforces disengagement.

- **Scheduling inflexibility:** Rigid or limited scheduling options make rescheduling hard for clients with complex lives.
- **Follow-up practices:** Clinicians who don't re-engage clients after cancellations often see higher drop-off rates.
- **Energy and burnout:** Clinician fatigue can affect tone, presence, and communication — lowering client motivation to attend.

3. System & Process Factors

Practice-wide operations and workflows play a key role in reducing cancellations.

- **Reminder systems:** Are reminders timely, consistent, and personalized? (e.g., same-day reminders often outperform 48-hour ones).
- **Policy enforcement:** Inconsistency in applying policies creates confusion or lack of accountability.
- **Ease of rescheduling:** Friction-filled rescheduling processes can turn short-term cancellations into permanent loss.

Where to Find it

- **Reports → Cancellation Report**
 - **Cancellations:** Advance cancellations, clinician cancellations, waived fees
 - Filter by total practice, compare clinicians, location, “type,” or supervisor.
 - **Reports → Completed Sessions Report**
 - **Billable Cancellations:** No shows/late cancels where the fee is charged
 - Filter by total practice, compare clinicians, location, “type,” or supervisor.
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Why It Matters — Cancellation Data Can Answer these Questions

- Which clinicians have higher-than-average cancellation rates?
- Are these client-initiated or clinician-initiated?
- Do certain seasons or months show spikes or dips in cancellations?
- Does clinician reliability impact client cancellations?

- How do cancellations affect utilization and revenue?
- How can I tell if our practice is **trending toward growth or decline** in cancellations over time?
- Which locations see more cancellations?
- How many bookings should clinicians schedule to account for cancellations?
- Are recent policy changes or communication helping to reduce cancellations?
- Do part-time clinicians experience higher cancellations?

Guided Practice: Working With Your Data

Use your **Cancellations Report** to explore these prompts.

1. Practice Wide Cancellations Vs. Benchmark

Question: How does your practice's overall cancellation rate compare to industry standards?

Where to Find It:

- Reports → *Cancellation Report*
- Metric: "As a Rate%"
- View: *Total Practice*
- Timeframe: "Last 12 months"
- Scroll down to "Total" to find your average across the past 12 months

Reflect: How does your average cancellation rate compare to these industry standards?

Cancel Rate	<10%	10% - 20%	>20%
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2. Clinician Cancellations*

Question: Which clinicians have the highest and lowest cancellation rates — and why?

Where to Find It:

- Report: *Cancellation Report*
- Metric: *Cancellation Rate (as a rate %)*

→ View: *Compare Clinicians*

→ Timeframe: *This year*

Reflect:

What patterns stand out? Are differences due to clinician communication, client engagement/retention, or scheduling flexibility?

**Depending on your EHR, you may need to set up a CPT code to track clinician cancellations*

3. Seasonal Trends

Question: Do cancellations rise during specific months or seasons?

Where to Find It:

→ Report: *Cancellation Report*

→ Metric: *Cancellation Rate (as a rate %)*

→ View: *Total Practice*

→ Timeframe: *Compare year over year (monthly)*

Reflect:

What seasonal patterns do you notice (e.g., summer, holidays)? How might you plan around them?

4. Cancellations as a Sign of Client Engagement

Question: Do clinicians with high cancellation rates also have lower retention?

Where to Find It:

→ Report: *Clinician Metrics*

→ Metric: *Cancellation Rate (as a rate %)* and *Client Retention (as a rate %)*

→ View: *Compare Clinicians*

→ Timeframe: *This year*

Reflect:

- **Client engagement:** Frequent cancellations may signal early drop-out risk.
- **Clinician communication:** Are policies and treatment plans clearly explained?
- **Client/clinician fit:** Do mismatches in style, specialty, or scheduling availability contribute?

5. Impact on Revenue

Question: How much revenue is lost due to cancellations?

Where to Find It:

- Report: *Cancellation Report*
- Metric: *Cancellations (as a count)*
- View: *Total Practice*
- Timeframe: *Last quarter*

Reflect:

Use the total unbilled cancellations × average session fee (e.g., $458 \times \$132 = \$60,456$). How does this impact your bottom line and clinician pay?

6. Impact on Scheduling & Utilization

Question: Are cancellations linked to lower clinician utilization?

Where to Find It:

- Report: *Clinician Metrics*
- Compare: *Cancellation Rate* and *Utilization %*
- Group By: *Any*
- Timeframe: *Any (past month, quarter or year)*

Reflect:

Are high-cancellation clinicians also under target in utilization? How can you use this data for coaching and support?

7. Policy Effectiveness

Question: Have recent policy or reminder updates reduced cancellations?

Where to Find It:

- Report: *Cancellation Report*
- Metric: *Cancellation Rate (as a rate %)*
- View: *Total Practice*
- Timeframe: *Compare before vs. after policy changes*

Reflect: Do you see measurable improvement? Are changes consistently communicated and enforced?

8. Group Analysis by Clinician “Type”

Question: Which groups (location, supervisor, type) maintain the lowest cancellation rates?

Where to Find It:

- Report: *Cancellation Report*
- Metric: *Cancellation Rate (as a rate %)*
- View: *Group by Location / Type / Supervisor*
- Timeframe: *This year*

Reflect: What differences stand out? What can be learned from high-performing groups?