

KEY POINTS

- After-Hours Guideline Annual Updates are typically released in the **spring**; Office Hours Guideline Annual Updates are typically released in the **summer**.
- Your call center Medical Director (or Review Board) should review and approve major content changes before implementation.
- Supporting documents (Nurse Update Letter, Redlines) are included to help expedite the review and approval of annual updates.

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Tips for Reviewing and Implementing STCC Annual Telehealth Updates

Each year, Schmitt-Thompson Clinical Content (STCC) releases annual updates of their telehealth content. This includes both adult and pediatric content, as well as After-Hours and Office-Hours guideline sets. Updates to the Care Advice handouts are also done on an annual basis. These changes match the annual updates in the guidelines.

These updates include important triage guideline changes based on new research, revised national guideline recommendations, and a rigorous STCC internal guideline review process. Feedback from our customers also provides valuable input in the guideline review process.

This newsletter answers frequently asked questions about the STCC annual updates. In addition, we include tips for how to efficiently review and approve content changes.

Frequently Asked Questions

When does STCC release new telehealth guideline updates?

- For the *After-Hours* guideline set, annual updates for adult and pediatrics are generally released in the **spring** (April). The annual updates of the *Office-Hours* protocols are typically released in mid-**summer** (July).
- Occasionally, an additional update will be made outside of these annual guideline update releases. This is only done when a major change or urgent need impacts telehealth. For example, multiple updates occurred outside of the annual release when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.

How are triage nurses and triage software partners notified of new guideline updates?

STCC sends updated guidelines and supporting documentation to our software partners after internal quality reviews. Your triage software vendor should communicate with your call center leadership when the updated content is received and when it will be ready for release. It is important to designate someone to work directly with your triage software partner. Communication is key!



How can call center leaders be aware of updates?

- Communicate with your software vendor; ask them to notify you when an update is received.
- Schedule regular check-ins with your software vendor, your clinical leadership, or in some cases, your information technology (IT) department.
- Check the [STCC website](#). Under the **Resources** tab you will find our **Release Dates**. *Note:* This is the date that STCC releases the update to our software partners. This is not necessarily when it will be released to your organization.
- Follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



Besides the guidelines, what additional information is included in an annual update?

- *New Guidelines:* PDF versions of any new guidelines that are part of the current release.
- *Redlines:* These are Word documents that compare the previous triage guideline and any newly modified guideline. All changes are color coded. The Redlines are sorted into two folders: major and minor changes.
- *Reports:* This includes additional documents that correlate with STCC content. Examples are indexes of guideline titles listed alphabetically, anatomically, and by specialty practice area. Also included is a list of all triage dispositions as well as telemedicine eligible options.
- *Updated Guidelines:* Updated PDFs of all the existing guidelines.
- *Nurse Update Letter:* This letter is a very important and helpful tool for reviewing what changes have been made to the guidelines. It highlights all new guidelines that have been added, as well as important clinical changes.

What is the User's Guide and why is it important?

- STCC sends the updated User's Guide to our **software partners 30 days or so after the annual update**.
- The User's Guide provides an overview of the STCC guidelines and the triage process. The User's Guide includes some key information related to frequently asked questions and challenges that are encountered during nurse triage. It is updated annually.
- Included with the User's Guide are multiple indexes. These indexes are supportive tools and detailed documents to assist with the triage process.
- There is a separate User's Guide for After-Hours and Office-Hours.
- If you are unfamiliar with the User's Guide, your software partner can show you where to access this. It is recommended to have the most recent version as a reference for practice.



Checklist For Reviewing and Implementing Annual Guideline Changes

	<p>Communicate with your triage software representative on an ongoing basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your software representative notifies you when annual updates are received. • This allows your team to review and approve the guidelines in a timely manner. It also helps ensure the implementation process goes as planned and key stakeholders are aware of when changes are implemented (go live).
	<p>Review all NEW guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and use the <i>Annual Nurse Update Letters</i> to learn about new guidelines. • A PDF is provided for all new guidelines. • New guidelines should be reviewed thoroughly. We suggest that in addition to medical leadership, call center managers and educators should also review the new guidelines.
	<p>Review all MAJOR and UNIVERSAL guideline changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and use the <i>Annual Nurse Update Letters</i> to learn about the major changes and universal changes made to the guidelines. • Universal changes are significant changes that have been made that affect multiple guidelines. An example is a change to universal care advice related to the use of an over-the-counter pain medicine. • Major changes include significant changes that will appear in triage assessment questions (TAQs), care advice, background information, and definitions of guidelines. • We suggest that, in addition to medical leadership, call center leaders (i.e., managers, educators) should also review major and universal changes. • Minor changes include minor grammar edits/word choice, updated references, and updated search words. These changes can be scanned for reference and do not need to be reviewed by organizations. <p>Tips for using the Redline documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redline Word documents show exactly where changes have been made in the guidelines. We provide redline documents for every guideline with each annual update. • They are separated into Major and Minor Redline folders. This allows medical directors and call center leaders to prioritize their review. • Redline comparison documents can sometimes be difficult to read. It is best practice to review the previous year's guideline with the new updated version (PDF). Sometimes, the formatting changes in the Word version. The PDF is the best source of truth.



	<p>Evaluate how new changes may affect previous customizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your organization may have made custom changes to triage guidelines or created your own custom guidelines. If so, it is important that you evaluate if a newly revised STCC guideline impacts your local customizations. For example, you may want to edit your custom changes based on a change in disposition or new care advice provided by STCC.
	<p>Educate you front-line nurses about the updates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideally, triage nurses should be aware of the new triage guidelines available with each release, as well as any other major or universal changes. This is best done prior to implementing the new updates. It is much harder to navigate and use new guidelines for the first time if a nurse is unfamiliar with them. Strategies for staff education include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share the <i>Annual Nurse Update Letters</i> via email or post on a shared site. ✓ Post PDFs of new guidelines on a shared site for nurses to review prior to implementation. ✓ Provide staff education prior to implementation.
	<p>Communicate with software vendor when review is complete.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify your software representative when your review and approval of the update is complete. If you desire to make any localized changes to the content, communicate those changes to your software representative. It is best to review any custom changes for accuracy prior to implementing the changes live. Communicate, in advance, to staff nurses the date and time when the new triage guideline updates will be implemented (go live).

Note: Most call centers have their medical director or leadership review the yearly changes before approval. Another option, subject to the approval of a medical director or medical advisory board, is to install the updated guidelines and use them while the internal review is ongoing.

Closing Thoughts

As you prepare for this year's annual updates, we hope this newsletter will help your organization navigate the review and implementation process. Coordination among clinical leaders, software and IT partners, and front-line nurses helps ensure a smooth transition. Thank you for your ongoing dedication to your patients and to telehealth triage. We are committed to supporting your telehealth content needs.