



Central California Emergency Medical Services Agency

A Division of Fresno County
Department of Public Health

SPECIAL MEMORANDUM

FILE #: F/K/M/T #06-2021

TO: All Fresno/Kings/Madera/Tulare EMS Providers, Hospitals, First Responder Agencies, and Interested Parties

FROM: Jim Andrews, M.D., EMS Medical Director
Daniel J. Lynch, Director

DATE: August 25, 2021

SUBJECT: EMS Policy 571 – Assess and Refer – no transport of patients meeting criteria in Fresno and Madera Counties

Effective at 0800 hours on August 26, 2021, and until further notice, the EMS agency is directing ambulance providers in Fresno and Madera Counties to implement EMS Policy 571 – Assess and Refer with the requirement that **patients meeting the criteria for assess and refer will no longer be transported to the hospital**. Currently, the EMS policy allows ambulance transport if the patient insists; however, due to current conditions at our hospitals in Fresno and Madera Counties, this exception is removed and patients meeting criteria will no longer be given the option for transport. The EMS agency is monitoring the status of Kings and Tulare County and will expand the new requirement if it becomes necessary.

The conditions regarding staffing and capacity within our local hospitals and ambulance providers has become extremely critical. Hospitals are operating at disaster levels and there is no patient bed capacity available. Most of our hospital emergency departments are holding ICU patients, which requires significant emergency department space and resources that are no longer available to the emergency department. In addition, emergency departments are often holding several medical/surgical patients within the emergency department. These are individuals that are admitted to the hospital and have no hospital bed to be moved to within the facility.

The hospital capacity and staffing issue has a domino effect on the EMS system and causes more frequent and increasing wait times for ambulances to turn over patients. We are frequently seeing ambulances waiting 3-7 hours to turn over a patient. In addition, ambulance providers are challenged with similar staffing shortages that impact the hospitals, which includes COVID positive employees and employees on isolation.

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Our EMS system is struggling at times to provide ambulance services to our communities. We need to make changes to assure that patients with emergent medical conditions are being taken care of with the limited resources that are available. Individuals with non-emergent medical complaints have other options and we have worked with our news agencies and other resources to educate our communities.

For the reasons described above, the EMS Agency is taking the unprecedented step of directing ambulance providers to no longer transport individuals with non-emergency medical complaints that meet the criteria listed in EMS Policy 571. The intent of this policy implementation is to reduce the impact of patients on local emergency departments and increase availability of ambulance to our communities.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Dale Dotson, EMS Coordinator at (559) 600-3387.