



County of San Diego

JEFF COLLINS
DIRECTOR
(858) 974-5924
Fax (858) 467-9662

PUBLIC SAFETY GROUP
SAN DIEGO COUNTY FIRE
SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES OFFICE
5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 250, San Diego, CA 92123-1239
www.SanDiegoCountyEMS.com

ANDREW (ANDY) PARR
EMS ADMINISTRATOR
Deputy Director, Departmental Operations
(619) 285-6429

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ASSESS AND REFER OPTION FOR LOW-RISK PATIENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – EXPANDED CRITERIA

San Diego County is experiencing COVID-19 pandemic-related healthcare system stress, including Emergency Department/Hospital crowding and prolonged Ambulance Patient Offload Times. The EMS Medical Director has implemented a time-limited Temporary Emergency Policy, the **ASSESS AND REFER** Option as outlined in [S-415A](#). This Assess and Refer Policy is effective immediately and remains activated until March 1, 2022. Agencies may use this option after appropriate training and EMS Office authorization. Requests for agency implementation shall be submitted via EMSNotifications@sdcounty.ca.gov. This policy supersedes all prior versions.

To preserve critical 9-1-1 and Emergency Department/Hospital resources, low-risk patients that do not require immediate 9-1-1 emergency ambulance transport to an Emergency Department may be referred to existing healthcare and community resources. Eligible patients with low-risk presentations include:

1. Stable patients suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19
2. Stable patients with minor extremity trauma
3. Stable patients with other low-acuity presentations, if authorized by a Base Hospital Physician

The eligibility criteria for stable patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections has been updated to reflect the evidence-based protection vaccinated and boosted patients receive against severe illness, hospitalization, and death. With this policy, EMTs, as well as Paramedics, working within the 9-1-1 system may apply this option, if authorized by their agency medical director. The policy also applies new tools, including the ability to provide patients a pulse oximeter for home monitoring.

All Assess and Refer patient dispositions shall be reported to the EMS Medical Director monthly for quality assurance purposes. Reports shall be submitted no later than the 15th day of the following month (i.e., November 15 for October's report). The Assess and Refer Report should include, but not be limited to, incident times, dates, and any repeat 9-1-1 calls within 72 hours. Submit the reports to EMSNotifications@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Thank you for continuing to provide outstanding care to our patients.

Respectfully,

San Diego County Emergency Medical Services Office
San Diego County Fire

cc: Eric McDonald, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer
Wilma Wooten, MD, MPH, Public Health Officer
Jeff Collins, Director
Andy Parr, EMS Administrator