



County of San Diego

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMS OFFLOAD TO ED WAITING ROOM OPTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

County of San Diego EMS actively monitors the health of the 9-1-1 delivery system. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased demands on the county's entire healthcare continuum. In an effort to preserve critical healthcare resources, including 9-1-1 ambulance availability, the County of San Diego EMS Medical Director has issued a temporary adjustment to the EMS emergency department (ED) handoff format.

Effective immediately, 9-1-1 system EMS providers (ALS or BLS) may offload their patients to the ED waiting area with notification to the triage nurse for patients meeting ALL the following criteria:¹

- [Transfer of care \(TOC\) time](#) for the transporting unit > 30 minutes
- Age ≥ 18 years; or pediatric patients accompanied by parent or another appropriate caregiver
- Normal mental status (GCS 15 and oriented to person, place, time, and event)
- Normal vital signs for adults (or age-appropriate vital signs for pediatrics)
 - SBP ≥ 90mm
 - HR 60-100
 - RR 12-20
 - SpO2 ≥ 94% on room air (sustained measure, including on exertion)
- Ambulatory with steady gait without assistance (as appropriate for age)
- Not suicidal
- Not on a current involuntary hold, conservatorship, or other need for safety monitoring
- No suspicion of acute substance ingestion or overdose
- No chest pain, syncope, or acute neurologic symptoms (e.g., focal weakness, dizziness, vertigo, imbalance)
- No ALS medications were administered, including fluid boluses. If an IV TKO has been established, it must be converted to a saline lock before an offload to an ED waiting area.

EMS will check in with receiving ED staff in accordance with standard procedures. If the TOC time is greater than 30 minutes, and the patient meets all criteria above, EMS personnel may transport the patient to the waiting area for offload. EMS personnel exercising this option shall notify the triage nurse of the patient's arrival, location in the waiting room/tent, and provide a transfer of care report.

When transferring a patient who meets the ED waiting area criteria, EMS personnel should pay close attention to ensuring continued COVID-19 transmission precautions, such as source patient

¹ Includes any patient meeting the [County of San Diego EMS Policy S-415](#) Emergency Patient definition.

masking and physical distancing from others. If these precautions cannot be accomplished, particularly in a high-risk patient such as an immunocompromised condition, the transfer shall be delayed until the ED waiting area situation improves.

EMS shall document that the Offload to Waiting Area Option criteria were met and the offload location (e.g., wheelchair, waiting area chair, triage tent, cot). Transfer of Care time should be recorded when the patient is offloaded and report provided to the receiving facility triage nurse (or ED designee).

Thank you for the outstanding care you provide to our patients, day in and day out. We recognize and appreciate your dedication during the special conditions of this pandemic.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kristi Koenig". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director
Emergency Medical Services
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cc: Nick Yphantides, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer
Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator