



San Joaquin County

Emergency Medical Services Agency



<http://www.sjgov.org/ems>

September 20, 2006

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Ron Hittle, Fire Chief
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Re: Letter of June 26, 2006

Dear Chief Hittle:

The County EMS Agency appreciates your input regarding the inclusion of Unusual Occurrence Reports in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process. Candid dialogue between the County EMS Agency and concerned participating organizations is what makes the CQI process an invaluable tool. It is for that reason that we hope you and your representatives will continue to actively participate in the CQI process.

The State EMS Authority requires local EMS agencies to develop a CQI program that includes, at a minimum, those elements identified in 22 CCR 100404. Clinical Care, Patient Outcome, and Risk Management are mandatory elements of the CQI program. These same regulations also specifically contemplate a CQI program for EMS dispatch that includes comparison of patient care to medical standards of practice and requires participation in the EMS CQI process. Additionally, the State EMS Authority recognizes that the CQI needs of local EMS agencies may differ, and for that reason expressly authorizes local EMS agencies to tailor their programs to meet their unique local needs. It is the conclusion of the San Joaquin County EMS Agency that Unusual Occurrence Reports constitute an important part of the CQI Clinical Care, Patient Outcome, and Risk Management analysis and are properly an included part of the medical review process.

Incorporation of the Unusual Occurrence Reports in the CQI process is critical to providing the public with the best EMS system available. It provides for clear oversight by the EMS Medical Director and the County EMS Agency. It also provides the EMS Agency with oversight of the corrective actions to be taken when an Unusual Occurrence Report is received. In addition it ensures the participation of all EMS system providers, such as: Emergency Department physicians and staff, paramedics, private ambulance companies and dispatch. The inclusion of all of the system providers is necessary for the County EMS Agency to have the ability to exercise its authority and because an active commitment of all EMS system providers is essential to the achievement of improved processes and patient outcomes. The participation of all of the EMS system providers ensures that decisions resulting from analysis of Unusual Occurrence Reports are consistent with the County EMS Agency's goal of providing quality care to the public. In essence, the EMS system providers represent the public's interest. Although review of individual occurrences is not made public, aggregate CQI information is provided to the Board of Supervisors in public sessions and is also made available to the public on the EMS website

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Chief Hittle, City of Stockton
Continuous Quality Improvement Process
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The legislature has weighed the public policies involved with making the proceedings of medical review organizations confidential. By enacting these statutes, the State legislature expressed its collective wisdom that confidential communication within the medical review process is more beneficial than having the process subject to public scrutiny. That is because of the need for candid patient care assessment and outcomes. We agree with the legislature that confidential medical review of Unusual Occurrences foster candid input of all of the system participants and as a result is beneficial to the public and enhances the participants' ability to best serve the public.

Again, thank you for your concern. I look forward to your continued participation in the CQI process.

Sincerely,



Dan Burch
EMS Administrator

cc: Board of Supervisors, County of San Joaquin
Manuel Lopez, County Administrator, County of San Joaquin
Kenneth B. Cohen, Director, Health Care Services, County of San Joaquin
City of Stockton City Council