

MEDICAL TRANSFERS

CHAPTER 16.1

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Submitted by: EMS Branch	Approved by: Chief of Fire Rescue

Purpose

To establish a guideline that will facilitate the timely and appropriate process for the request of and response to medical transfers.

General Information

The District Chief has the discretion of unit assignment for long and medium distance transfers.

If the transport unit is delayed greater than fifteen (15) minutes of the schedule time of pick up, contact must be made with the transferring facility. The Company Officer of the assigned unit is responsible to ensure that delay notification is made.

Below are three general categories of medical transfers:

1. **Hospital to Hospital Transfers:** These transfers are guaranteed payment. The destination hospital should have a pre-arranged agreement with the hospital stating they are responsible for payment.
2. **Hospital to LTAC (Long Term Acute Care):** These transfers can be paid several different ways; ultimately the sending facility is responsible for payment. This billing issue will be handled post transfer for in county transfers. Out of county transfers to LTAC should have billing approval prior to transfer.
3. **Hospital to Home:** Insurance often times needs pre-authorization and/or sometimes they are private pay. Payment will need to be secured prior to accepting these transfers.

Transfers of medical staff from an airport with patients/organs will terminate at the time of delivery to their destination. Request to wait for a return trip while team delivers patient/organ will require a wait clock on the initial CR. Transfer of the team back to the origination will require a second CR.

Transfers of this nature will require documentation of the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) number along with the description of the organ (i.e. set of lungs) and the tail number of the plane.

Transfers that do not have a patient or organ ready upon arrival, the Lieutenant can inquire how long of a wait. If greater than 15 minutes, the Lieutenant can use discretion to clear the call and request that they resubmit the transfer when ready. Should the time of at facility exceed 30 minutes prior to transport, the Lieutenant shall notify the on-duty District Chief. An email shall be sent to the EMS District Chief and the EMS Chief with call number, reason for delay and total time delay prior to transport.

Transfer of FSED Baker Act patients who are not an immediate threat to themselves or EMS professionals may be handled without law enforcement based on Lieutenant discretion. If at any time the patient appears to be a threat, notify LEA immediately and request a hot response. Baker Act patients from NF FSED will be assigned to the closest CC truck or rescue and will have priority bed assignment at North Florida's Main Campus. For additional, please refer to your medical protocols.

On arrival of the facility, if the Lieutenant determines the patient's condition/treatment exceeds the paramedic's scope of practice, he/she shall contact the on-duty District Chief or Medical Director for direction.

Any pediatric transfer patient under the age of 1 year old, that is either intubated or being transferred to PICU/NICU shall be referred to ShandsCair for transport. Any transfer of a pediatric patient under 10 pounds shall be deferred to ShandsCair for transport.

Local Transfers

Transfers that originate and terminate within Alachua County are considered "In-County".

Transfers that originate and terminate within the boundaries of counties that are contiguous with Alachua County are considered "Out-of-County".

All hot (in-county) local transfers shall be assigned to the closest rescue or CC unit available and should be processed through the Combined Communication Center (CCC) at (352) 955-1818.

Cold local transfers may be scheduled either through the Alachua County Fire Rescue (ACFR) Billing Department at (352) 384-3150 or through CCC at (352) 955-1818. Cold local transfers are preferred to be approved by billing but should not be held up if billing is unavailable.

Cold MCF local (in-county) transfers will be assigned to the closest available CC truck. These calls can hold for the next available CC truck for up to 1 hour unless approved by on-duty District Chief. The on-duty District Chief may assign a cold MCF to a rescue if deemed necessary to maintain operations. At the one hour hold of a MCF cold transfer, the call shall be released to the closest rescue or one determined by the on-duty District Chief.

Cold HCF local (in-county) transfers will be assigned to the closest available rescue or CC truck. The on-duty District Chief may grant exceptions based on operational considerations.

Local transfers (out-of-county) will be assigned to a CC truck and do not count towards the policy of only two out-of-town transfers at one time. The On-duty District Chief may utilize a rescue to handle to maintain operations.

Department Rules and Regulations for meal breaks apply (Chapter 7.6) and no local out of county meal breaks will be authorized.

Medium Distance Transfers

Medium-distance Transfer is defined as a transfer destination or origination that is outside of the "local" definition but generally within the border described as: east to the Atlantic; southern borders of Volusia, Seminole, Orange, Lake, Sumter, and Pasco counties; southwest to the Gulf; western borders of Franklin, Wakula, and Leon counties, north to include Georgia counties that are contiguous with Florida to include the city of Valdosta over to the northern border of Nassau County, FL.

Medium-distance transfers will be generated through the ACFR Billing Department. The Billing Department mainline is (352) 384-3399 and their hours are Monday through Thursday 7:00 to 17:30 (excluding holidays). After-hour requests go through on-call staff at (352) 240-4016. Any issues regarding to billing that cannot be handled through these means can be sent to the Medical Billing and Compliance Officer Melinda Hart (mgh@alachuacounty.us).

Once the Billing Department has approved the transfer, the request will be electronically sent to CCC. The on-duty District Chief shall work with the CCC to determine if the transfer can be made based on operations. The District Chief will attempt to schedule the transfer for a time mutually beneficial to the Department and the Hospital. The District Chief shall consider the following: unit availability, distance of transfer, time of day, and number of current out of town transfers. All accepted and rejected transfers shall be included in the Daily District Chief Shift Report.

There shall be no more than two long-distance and/or medium-distance transfer at the same time without approval of the on-duty District Chief.

Transfers will be handled on a first scheduled, first served basis seven (7) days a week. The transfers will be handled at the discretion of the on-duty District Chief.

Any meal break while out of county will require prior authorization of the District Chief and at no time exceed 30 minutes.

Long Distance Transfers

A transfer destination or origination that is outside of Alachua County and/or the Medium Distance Transfer Border.

Long Distance transfers will be generated through the ACFR Billing Department. The Billing Department mainline is (352) 384-3399 and their hours are Monday through Thursday 7:00 to 17:30 (excluding holidays). After-hour requests go through on-call staff @ (352) 240-4016. Any issues regarding to billing that cannot be handled through these means can be sent to the Medical Billing and Compliance Officer Melinda Hart (mgh@alachuacounty.us).

Once the Billing Department has approved the transfer, the request will be electronically sent to CCC. The on-duty District Chief shall work with the CCC to determine if the transfer can be made based on operations. The District Chief will attempt to schedule the transfer for a time mutually beneficial to the Department and the Hospital. The District Chief shall consider the following: unit availability, distance of transfer, time of day, and number of current out of town transfers. All accepted and rejected transfers shall be included in the Daily District Chief Shift Report.

There shall be no more than two medium distance and/or long-distance transfers at the same time without approval of the on-duty District Chief.

Long distance transfers will be handled on a first scheduled, first served basis seven (7) days a week. The on-duty District Chief may grant exceptions based on operational considerations

Any meal break while out of county will require prior authorization of the District Chief and at no time exceed 30 minutes.

Definitions

Medical Care Facility (MCF): A hospital facility that has the capability of providing definitive emergency medicine. The MCF's within Alachua County include: Shands, North Florida, Veterans Affairs, and all FSED's. * Also incorporates Emergency Physicians Medical Center and Gainesville Regional Airport.

Health Care Facility (HCF): describes facilities that may have skilled medical staff that can provide assisted care but not definitive emergency medicine.

Free Standing Emergency Department (FSED): A MCF that is independent of the main hospital that houses only an emergency room and no capabilities for long term care.

Cold: Calls that are not considered life threatening based on information received by CCC and Emergency Medical Dispatch protocols.

Hot: Calls that require immediate assistance and should prompt a response by the closest available unit.

Critical Care (CC): CC trucks are designated as such in CAD and are part of the Peak Load Division of ACFR. CC Trucks carry specialized equipment and the personnel have additional training to handle higher acuity / specialized transfers.

Physician Certification Statement (PCS) Forms: this form is required on all non-emergent (cold) transfers and must be signed by a medical professional, case manager, or discharge planner. This form is meant to verify the medical necessity for the transfer.

Acknowledgement of Liability Form: required when the transferring facility does not have an agreement guaranteeing payment.

Advanced Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage (ABN): Notice to beneficiaries that Medicare is not likely to provide coverage in a specific case. Billing will advise if this form is required and it must be signed by the individual being transported or their medical proxy.