

# WEST CARROLL HEALTH SYSTEMS

## ***EMTALA ORIENTATION***

### ***WHAT IS EMTALA?***

Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. This is part of the COBRA Law which was passed by Congress in 1986.

### ***PURPOSE OF EMTALA***

EMTALA ensures that all persons receive equal access to screening and stabilizing medical treatment when indicated. Anti-discrimination law is based on the ability of patient to pay, financial and socioeconomic status. This law prevents hospitals from “rejecting” or “dumping” patients.

### ***REQUIREMENTS***

We are responsible for individuals “requesting” care who are on campus, including the parking lot, sidewalk, driveway, restrooms, etc. Care is considered to be “requested” when the request is made by the patient, on the patient’s behalf by someone else, or if it is obvious to a layperson that the individual is in need of care. Signs are posted in the facility stating our obligations. The Emergency Room logs each individual that “requests” treatment. A list of on-call physicians is retained for five years. All transfers from one facility to another follow guidelines.

### ***MEDICAL SCREENING EXAMINATION (MSE)***

Anyone “requesting” care receives a MSE to determine if an emergency medical condition exists. MSE cannot be delayed to inquire about method of payment or insurance status. MSE must be based on the capabilities of West Carroll Health Systems, not the patient’s ability to pay. MSE is performed by the physician or mid-level practitioner. The MSE is separate from triage (triage is the determination of the order in which patients are seen, based on their injury or symptoms).

### ***COMPONENTS OF MEDICAL SCREENING EXAM***

The medical screening exam includes triage information with presenting complaint and vital signs, oral history, and physical exam of affected systems and potentially affected systems.

### ***EMERGENCY MEDICAL CONDITION (EMC)***

The MSE is done to determine if an emergency medical condition exists. An emergency medical condition manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity such that the absence of immediate medical attention could be expected to result in: (1) placing the patient or unborn child in a serious jeopardy; (2) serious impairment to bodily functions; (3) serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part. Only a physician or mid-level practitioner can determine if an EMC is present.

## ***WCHS'S RESPONSIBILITY WHEN AN EMC IS PRESENT***

WCHS provides treatment to stabilize the EMC within our capabilities. If necessary, the appropriate transfer to another medical facility shall be facilitated. The patient shall be stabilized prior to discharge with an assessment and plan for follow-up care with discharge instructions.

## ***APPROPRIATE TRANSFERS***

It may be necessary to transfer patients to other facilities, in the following circumstances:

1. Medical treatment has been provided to the extent of our capabilities
2. The receiving facility has available space and qualified personnel
3. The receiving physician and facility have agreed to accept the transfer
4. During the transfer the use of qualified personnel and transportation equipment is utilized
5. The risks and benefits of the transfer are documented

## ***EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES***

Never discourage anyone from seeking treatment. Your attitude can be a discouragement, regardless of what you say. Phrases such as “we are too busy today”, “all the rooms are full, so you will have to wait”, “there is an ambulance coming in, so it will be a while before we can see you”, “we have a lot of patients today, so you may have to wait a while”, should NEVER be part of our vocabulary. Our response should always be courteous and compassionate, with phrases such as, “I am sorry you are having to wait, but we will be with you as soon as possible.”

All patients requesting treatment should be directed to the Emergency Room. The patient should be accompanied to the Emergency Room, to ensure they arrive. If the patient needs more assistance than you can provide, call the Emergency Room and ask for help. If the patient refuses, call the Emergency Room to request assistance or report the situation to the Emergency Room. Please keep in mind that a request for treatment can be made by the patient or on their behalf by someone else. When a patient obviously needs assistance, they have “requested” treatment whether they ask for it or not.

Review your department's policy and procedure manual on a regular basis. A pleasant, helpful, compassionate attitude helps to make even the most difficult situations better for our patients, their families and coworkers. All patients should be treated with the same respect, regardless of financial situation, race, religion, etc. Even if a patient has been in our facility multiple times, the same policies and procedures shall be followed each and every time.