



Division 5 Emergency Medical Services

Chapter 19 – Emergency Transportation Fee

March 2009

POLICY

This General Order establishes guidelines and procedures governing all aspects of billing the emergency transportation fee.

DEFINITIONS

Basic Life Support (BLS) – Transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services, including BLS ambulance services as defined by the state. The ambulance must be staffed by an individual who is qualified in accordance with state and local laws as an Medical Emergency Technician –Basic (EMT-B). An EMT-B is permitted to operate limited equipment onboard the vehicle, assist more qualified personnel in performing assessments and interventions and establish a peripheral intravenous (IV) line.

Advanced Life Support 1 (ALS-1) – Transportation by ground ambulance and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services including the provision of an ALS assessment or a least one ALS interventions.

Advanced Life Support -2 (ALS-2) – Transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services including: (1) at least three separate administrations of one or more medications by intravenous push/bolus or by continuous infusion; or (2) ground ambulance transport and the provision of at least one or more specified ALS-2 interventions. These interventions are: manual defibrillation/cardioversion, endotracheal intubation, central venous line, cardiac pacing, chest decompression, surgical airway

or intraosseous line. This also clarified that administration of the same medication three or more times qualifies as ALS-2 level transport.

Emergency Transportation - The emergent transportation of patients within the scope of the EMS Operational Program managed by the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department as designated by the Prince George's County Fire Chief (Code Sec. 11-345).

Eligible Corporation – A volunteer corporation participating in a memorandum of understanding between the corporation and the Prince Georges County Government regarding transportation fees.

Volunteer BLS Unit – a BLS transport unit owned by a volunteer corporation that meets or exceeds all applicable standards for operational EMS service in Prince George’s County.

Volunteer Provider – A member of an ambulance crew that is certified or licensed with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMSS) and is a qualified member of a volunteer corporation and a member of the Prince George’s County Fire/EMS Department.

Volunteer BLS Transport – a patient transport completed by a Volunteer BLS Unit using only qualified Volunteer Providers as outlined by this General Order.

PROCEDURES

1. General Provisions



As set forth by Prince George's County Code, Section 11-346 et seq., and defined in Section 11-345, Prince George's County is authorized to bill and collect for emergency transportation fees and related services.

Providers must always act in the patient's best interest. Patient care shall not be delayed or otherwise impacted to obtain necessary patient information or consent signatures. Information for critically ill or injured patients may be obtained at the receiving facility upon transfer of care.

Providers shall not consider the financial impact of collecting emergency transportation fees when making patient care and transportation decisions.

2. Implementation

By Executive Order, only the authorized agent identified by Prince George's County shall be permitted to bill for emergency transportation fees on behalf of Prince George's County, Maryland.

Furthermore, pursuant to Prince George's County Code, Section 11-346, no person shall be denied emergency care or transportation because of an inability to pay the fee required by the County Code, and no person shall be questioned about an ability to pay such fee at the time the service is requested or rendered.

3. Billing Documentation

Several critical patient data elements should be documented by EMS providers to ensure the best possible billing performance. Each of the following data elements must be entered into the electronic patient care report (ePCR) immediately after the incident is completed.

- The Patients Full Name
- The Patients Date of Birth
- The Patients Social Security Number
- The Patients Home Address
- The Patients Home Phone Number

4. Personal Information Data Security

The security of this personal data is of utmost importance. Any hand written notes of patient information must be shredded upon completion of the electronic patient care report. At no time should this information be outside the custody of the provider.

5. Consent for Billing

Federal insurance regulations require a patient's written consent to bill the patient's insurance carriers for transportation services. Providers must secure a signature, or suitable substitute, from each patient that is transported by the Prince Georges County Fire/EMS Department.

This consent for billing has no bearing on consent for treatment or transportation.

6. Volunteer BLS Transports

This policy identifies those transports that are eligible "volunteer BLS transports." Those funds collected by the County will be distributed to each eligible corporation as outlined in the memorandum of understanding between the corporation and the Prince Georges County Government.

Eligibility

Providers may request a transport to be designated a "Volunteer BLS Transport" only if ALL of the following conditions exist:



- All EMS providers on the transport unit are volunteer members of the department.
- All members of the crew must be in good operational standing with Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department.
- All members of the crew must have valid certifications/licenses as EMS Providers with the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS).
- The transport unit must be owned by the volunteer corporation.
 - Other approved volunteer corporation units can be borrowed and placed in service for the purposes of billing.
 - Other transport units may be approved by The Fire Chief or his/her designee.

A patient transported in a volunteer BLS unit in the care of an ALS provider is generally not eligible.

Disposition Code

Public Safety Communications (PSC) will notate incidents using a disposition code. If all of the eligibility conditions are satisfied, the incident will be closed using a "Volunteer BLS Transport" disposition code.

This disposition code is the primary means used to generate a report of those transports which are billed by the County ambulance billing contractor for the benefit of the volunteer corporation. PSC bears no responsibility to determine which providers or which units completed the transport.

The Computer Aided Dispatch CAD records and the electronic patient care report are used to verify eligibility information. It is the responsibility of the volunteer providers to

request this disposition code when the unit returns to service from the receiving facility and accurately complete the electronic patient care report.

Disposition Code Corrections

EMS personnel must verify the proper disposition code found on the final CAD printout for the incident. Any discrepancies should be corrected through PSC immediately. If an eligible incident was not closed out with the appropriate disposition code, PSC may be able to change the disposition code for a period of approximately 24 hours after the incident was initially dispatched.

Volunteer BLS Transport Report

A report generated by CAD data indicating those transports that have been submitted to the County billing contractor as "volunteer BLS transports" will be provided to each Corporation participating in the Memorandum of Understanding.

This report is used to ensure the accuracy of the data reported to the CAD and as the basis for the Appeal Process described below.

This report is not intended to describe the financial data, merely the accuracy of the information provided by the operational personnel. Financial data is provided by Fiscal Affairs.

After the monthly Volunteer BLS Transport report is received, an eligible corporation may appeal in writing to reclassify transports as "volunteer BLS transports." To be reclassified, the Corporation must:

- Provide an explanation of why the primary disposition code process did not properly document the transport



- Provide documentation that the eligibility requirements described above were met for each transport in question.
- Submit a written request to the Advanced Emergency Medical Services Office within 15 days after the monthly Volunteer BLS Transportation Report is received by the Corporation.
- This appeal process will not consider any more than 20% of the eligible transports in any given month.

11. Billing Vendor

Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department has contracted an outside vendor to process emergency transportation fee billing. The billing vendor receives patient information from the ePCR and ambulance signature forms, and utilizes this information to bill appropriately.

The Department receives payments via Lockbox and electronic data transmission (for the major insurance companies), and the vendor notifies Fiscal Affairs of the deposit details. The Vendor forwards fee invoices to Fiscal Affairs detailing deposits and respective fees. Lockbox fees will be assessed to the Department by the Prince George's County Office of Finance.

Volunteer Companies participating in the MOU (Ambulance Billing Agreement Volunteer Corporation) dated February 11, 2009, will be paid in accordance with the MOU. Monthly statements will be provided by the Department.

12. Fiscal Affairs

Fiscal Affairs shall review and approve fee invoices and requests appropriate payments.

Fiscal Affairs shall prepare monthly reconciliation statements between the billing vendor and the Prince George's County Financial system.

Fiscal Affairs shall prepare deposit reconciliation forms for the financial system, and will be responsible for reconciliation of all deposits monthly.

13. Compliance

Providers that do not provide the appropriate billing information will be in violation of this general order and will be subject to disciplinary action.

The career supervisor or volunteer chief will be held accountable when a consistent pattern of non-compliance exists.

REFERENCES

Prince Georges County Code, Subtitle 11, Section 345

Executive Order – August 12, 2008

Memorandum of Understanding – December 18, 2008

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

N/A