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I. **AUTHORITY:**

Health and Safety Code (H & S) 1797.220. The local EMS agency shall establish policies and procedures approved by the medical director of the local EMS agency to assure medical control of the EMS system. The policies and procedures approved by the medical director may require basic life support emergency medical transportation services to meet any medical control requirements including dispatch, patient destination policies, patient care quidelines, and quality assurance requirements

APPLICATION: II.

This policy defines the dispatch system levels, the criteria, the application process criteria, and the administration and approval process for an emergency medical dispatcher training program.

DEFINITIONS: III.

Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) means any person employed by an agency providing emergency medical dispatch service who has completed an Orange County Emergency Medical Services (OCEMS) approved EMD training program consistent with these guidelines.*

Emergency Medical Dispatch System means a specialized communications system responsible for consumer access to emergency medical services, the centralized dispatch and coordination of EMS resources, the designation of nearest appropriate EMS responders, and the coordination of EMS resources with other public safety services.**

Emergency Medical Dispatcher Training Program means an OCEMS approved program which meets the required course content and structure specifications of the State EMS Authority EMD Training Guidelines for training emergency medical dispatchers.

Level-I Call Routing means a level of service characterized by a dispatcher who is limited to determining whether a request for services requires a medical or non-medical response. When a medical response is requested, the call is referred to the responsible medical dispatch agency or the highest level of care available is sent. No determination as to what kind of medical service is needed or how many agencies should respond is made.

Level-II Priority Dispatching means a level of service characterized by a dispatcher who is responsible for determining through key medical questions, whether the call is a life threatening or non-life threatening emergency. The dispatcher takes action on the request and, using established guidelines, determines the level and type of response. In all cases, a medical response is dispatched. This level of service may, depending on local approval, include pre-arrival instructions after emergency medical services have been sent.

Level-III Call Screening means a level of service characterized by a dispatcher performing, in addition to those functions of a Level-II dispatcher, pre-arrival instructions when authorized. The most significant characteristic of this level is the EMD determines whether an EMS unit or alternate resources such as fire or police will be sent, based upon established key questions and local protocol.

Italicized Text Identifies Quotations from an Authority Outside the OCEMS.

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^{*} State EMS Authority EMD Training Guidelines

^{**} State EMS Authority EMS Systems Standards and Guidelines



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Medical Dispatch Priority Reference System means a response enhancement system utilized by EMDs, consisting of the OCEMS approved systemized caller interrogation questions (key medical questions), protocols for dispatcher's evaluation of injury or illness severity, vehicle response made and configuration, and systematized pre-arrival instructions.

IV. AGENCIES ELIGIBLE FOR EMD TRAINING:

Emergency medical dispatching may only be performed by agencies approved by the OCEMS Medical Director. Such agencies shall include:

- A. Fire service agencies responsible for allocating emergency medical resources.
- В. Agencies of local government, other than fire or law enforcement services, responsible for coordinating emergency medical services communications.
- C. Law enforcement agencies whose dispatchers, through the 911 access system, interface with citizens requesting emergency assistance, and who interface with fire service agencies responsible for allocating emergency medical services resources.

٧. REQUIRED COURSE CONTENT BY LEVEL OF DISPATCH:

Approved EMD training programs for each of the emergency dispatching levels referenced in this policy and procedure shall consist of the following instructional elements.

A. Level-I: Call Routing

- One, four-hour unit on medical dispatch orientation, consisting of an overview of what the OCEMS System is, how it operates, when it is activated, the level of emergency medical dispatch performed, and what types of medical dispatch systems are available.
- One, two-hour unit on basic telecommunications, consisting of the types of telecommunication equipment utilized in the agency's jurisdiction, how the equipment functionally operates, and how the equipment integrates with the OCEMS System.
- 3. Periodic written and practical testing for each performance objective.
- 4. One, two-hour validated competency based written and practical examination.
- B. Level-I: Call routing and follow-up questions.

In addition to those instructional elements required for EMD training programs for standard Level-I dispatching systems, an EMD training program for a Level-I dispatching system authorized by the EMS Agency for follow-up questions shall consist of the following instructional units:

- One, two-hour unit on obtaining information from the caller, consisting of how to obtain information from the caller, the philosophy of medical interrogation, the concept of hysteria threshold, and mis-conceptions about caller interrogation.
- One, eight-hour unit on using a medical dispatch priority reference system (MDPRS), consisting of familiarity with the priorities and medical conditions listed in the local MDPRS, and utilization of follow-up questions through the MDPRS.
- Periodic written and practical testing for performance objectives.

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4. One, two hour written and practical, validated competency-based final examination utilized for course completion.

C. Level-I: Call routing and follow-up questions and pre-arrival instructions.

In addition to those instructional elements required for EMD call routing and follow-up questions and pre-arrival instructions, training shall include instructional elements required for Level-II and Level-III dispatching systems.

D. Level-II Priority Dispatching and Level III Call Screening

In addition to those instructional elements required for EMD training programs for Level-I systems authorized for follow-up questions and pre-arrival instructions, an EMD training program for a Level-II and Level III dispatching system shall consist of the following instructional elements:

- One, eight hour unit on providing pre-arrival instructions, consisting of determining the need for pre-arrival instructions, communicating pre-arrival instructions to the caller, and the basic premise for giving pre-arrival instructions to the caller.
- One, three hour unit on medical/legal considerations, consisting of definitions of specific legal terms, identification of factors which reduce the liability risks when performing priority dispatching and/or call screening functions, and discussion of local procedures for handling special and unusual circumstances. This unit will also include discussion of quality assurance programs and medical control issues and the dispatcher's relationship to the OCEMS.
- One, two hour unit on allocation of OCEMS resources, consisting of identifying the benefits of a response allocation system, determining the appropriate resources to allocate based on specific factors (e.g., type and number of response units and their personnel available, the proximity of vehicles to patients, and medical mutual aid agreements).
- One, eight hour practical laboratory, consisting of obtaining information from the caller, determining the EMS response, dispatch in accordance with the locally adopted MDPRS, providing pre-arrival instructions in accordance with the locally adopted MDPRS, and communicating information received from followup questions to enroute responders.
- One, two-hour unit on multi-casualty incidents and disaster procedures," consisting of the role of the EMD in a multi-casualty incident or disaster situation, local procedures used to ensure appropriate EMS response, and coordination with other responding agencies.
- 6. Complete training in basic cardiac life support and standard first aid which meet the standards of the American Heart Association and/or the American Red Cross.
- 7. Periodic written and practical testing of each performance objective.
- 8. One, two hour written and practical, validated competency based final examination utilized for course completion.

VI. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION:

OCEMS approved EMD training programs shall provide the functions of administrative direction, medical quality control, and actual program instruction. Nothing in this policy and procedure precludes the same individual from being responsible for more than one of the following functions if so qualified:

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A. Program Director: Each EMD training program shall have a program director who shall be qualified by education, and experienced in the methods, materials, and evaluation of instruction. The program director shall provide all written and practical examinations, coordinate all instructional activities, assure medical quality control of the program and approve all principal instructors and teaching assistants in accordance with OCEMS policy and procedures. The program director will also ensure that all aspects of the EMD training program are in compliance with the State EMS Authority EMD Training Guidelines and this policy and procedure.

- B. Principal Instructor: Each EMD training course shall have a principal instructor with the following qualifications: 1) Currently certified as an emergency medical technician-IA, 2) currently certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and 3) a minimum of two (2) years experience in the practice of dispatching emergency medical resources in the last five (5) years. The principal instructor shall teach no less than fifty (50) percent of the didactic classroom hours.
- C. Teaching Assistant: Each EMD training program may have teaching assistants, qualified by experience or training to assist with teaching the course and shall be approved by the program director in cooperation with the principal instructor as qualified to assist in teaching the topics to which the assistant is to be assigned.

D. Reporting

- 1. All EMD program materials specified in this policy and procedure shall be subject to periodic review by the OCEMS.
- 2. Any person or agency conducting an EMD training program shall notify the OCEMS in writing within thirty (30) days of any change in course content, hours of instruction, course location(s), written agreements between agencies for EMD training, administration, and emergency medical dispatch tape audit process.
- 3. All OCEMS approved EMD training programs shall provide the OCEMS with
 - a. a complete listing of all administrative and instructional members at the beginning of each course
 - b. a complete listing of graduates, along with their individual written and practical examination scores on course completion
 - c. an annual written report to include: 1) number of students trained, 2) number of students enrolled, 3) number of graduates, 4) written and practical examination scores of graduates and non-graduates, 5) additions or deletions in program administrative and instructional personnel, 6) a summary evaluation of the EMD training program.
- E. Course Completion Record: An OCEMS approved EMD training program shall issue a course completion record to each person who successfully completes its training program. The course completion record shall contain the following:
 - 1. The name of the individual.
 - 2. The name and location of the agency issuing the course completion record.
 - 3. The date of course completion.
 - 4. The total number of hours completed.

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5. The level of EMD training received (i.e., Level-I, with or without additional authorized training for follow-up questions and/or pre-arrival instructions; Level-III or Level-III Dispatching Systems).

- 6. The name and signature of the program director.
- 7. The name and signature of the principal instructor.

VII. PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Approval of EMD training programs by the OCEMS shall be made on the basis of a comprehensive evaluation of required material received from the submitting agency.

- A. Evaluation criteria utilized by the OCEMS shall include:
 - 1. Verification that the submitting agency's program follows the State EMS Authority EMD Training Guidelines and this policy for required instructional elements, course content, time frames, testing, based upon which EMD Level the submitting agency has chosen.
 - 2. Verification that the submitting agency meets the criteria for agencies eligible to conduct EMD training.
- B. Program approval or disapproval shall be made in writing by the OCEMS within ninety (90) days after receipt of submitting agency's application and required supportive documentation materials.
- C. Program approval shall be for two (2) years following the effective date of the program approval and may be renewed biennially, subject to the provisions of this policy and procedure.

VIII. APPLICATION PROCESS:

An agency or facility proposing to conduct an EMD training program shall submit a written request for EMD training program approval to the OCEMS. The application shall include:

- A. The name and location of the submitting agency, the application date and the name, position, telephone number, and signature of the individual(s) who prepared the application package.
- B. Course outline of proposed EMD training program, consisting of all instructional elements and associated hours of instruction specified for the emergency medical dispatch level (I, II, or III) chosen by the submitting agency, learning opportunities, and goals and performance objectives for each instructional element.
- C. Sample written and practical examinations for periodic testing of each performance objective.
- D. Sample of the validated competency-based written and practical final examination utilized for course completion.
- E. Description of the process used to validate the final written and practical examination utilized for course completion; including validation process results.
- F. A description of the program evaluation process, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Evaluation of students objectives
 - 2. Evaluation of program content
 - 3. Evaluation of learning opportunities

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- 4. Evaluation of instructor (s)
- 5. Evaluation of program environment
- 6. Evaluation of learning materials
- G. Sample instructional materials, to be utilized in the proposed EMD training program, including:
 - Medical Dispatch Priority Reference System. 1.
 - 2. Other instructional materials to be utilized in the proposed EMD training program, including handouts, books, etc.
- Η. Names, telephone numbers, and qualifications of the program director, principal instructors(s), and teaching assistant(s).
- I. The location(s) where the EMD training program courses will be held.
- Provision to establish written agreements with other agencies to conduct EMD training should the J. submitting agency choose to conduct EMD training for other agencies or have its personnel trained by another eligible agency.

IX. WITHDRAWAL OF PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Non-compliance with criteria required for program approval, use of any unauthorized teaching personnel, or noncompliance with other applicable provisions of this policy and procedure or the State EMS Authority EMD Training Guidelines may result in withdrawal of program approval by the OCEMS.

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