
**Ames Fire Department
Standard Operating Guidelines**

Book: 3 – Emergency Operations
Section: V – Medical Emergencies
Chapter: 3 – **Consent Refusal of Care**
Date Approved: 1-11-2016 Revision No.: New
Review Date: 2019

Approved by: 

PURPOSE:

This guideline establishes the management and documentation of situations where patients refuse treatment or transportation, or insist on transportation to a destination other than recommended by Ames Fire Department (AFD) members.

POLICY:

The intent of this policy is to ensure that patients receive the best possible outcome while under the care of AFD members in the role of EMS provider(s).

PROCEDURES:

Refusal of Care

AFD EMS provider(s) should attempt to obtain a history and perform a physical assessment in as much detail as is permitted by the patient. Prior to permitting a patient to refuse care and/or transportation, provider(s) should attempt to assess the following three major areas:

- Legal Capacity to Refuse Care
 - A patient at least 18 years of age with the legal, mental, medical, and situational capacity to understand the risks and alternatives to treatment and transportation may refuse care.
 - A custodial parent (i.e., a parent with a legal right to custody of a minor child) may refuse care on behalf of a minor child. In this case, obtain refusal signature from parent.
 - A legally emancipated minor with documentation (over the age of 16 and under the age of 18), may refuse care.
 - Only the patient's legal guardian (18 years or older) may refuse care on behalf of their child.
- Mental Capacity to Refuse Care
 - Ensure patient is oriented to person, place, time, and event.
 - Establish patient is not a danger to self or others.
 - Ensure patient is capable of understanding any risks of refusing care, transportation, and any proposed alternatives.
- Medical or Situational Capacity
 - Ensure patient is not suffering from acute medical conditions that may impair decision making ability.

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- Ensure patient is not exhibiting signs or symptoms of potential mental incapacity (e.g., drug or alcohol intoxication, unsteady gait, slurred speech, postictal period after seizure, etc.).

Refusal Procedures

In cases where a patient refuses care or, against the advice of AFD EMS providers, or is insistent on being transported by someone other than the responding ambulance:

- Conduct a thorough patient assessment, including a minimum of one full set of vital signs;
- Provide detailed explanation of possible risks and danger signs to patient or other designee;
- Review EMS Patient Refusal form with patient or designee; if required read form aloud to the patient; and
- Inform the patient to call 911, call their doctor, or go to an emergency department if symptoms persist, get worse, or any new signs or symptoms appear.

Have patient or patient's designee sign the EMS Patient Refusal form. If a patient refuses to sign refusal, document this fact and obtain a signature of a witness.

- A witness preferably, is someone who witnessed the explanation of risks and benefits to the patient, and heard patient decline to sign refusal form.
- Witnesses may include law enforcement personnel.
- Witnesses should be 18 years of age or older.

Law Enforcement Transport

In the event a law enforcement officer is considering transporting a Fire Department patient not in police custody, in a non-transporting vehicle, AFD EMS providers shall:

- Complete a full patient assessment, documenting at a minimum one complete set of vitals;
- Describe to the patient the risks of transportation without a medical attendant, and obtain verbalized understanding;
- Obtain approval from Medical Control;
- Complete a signed EMS Patient Refusal form; and
- Document the transporting officer's name, badge number, and reason for transporting in the medical report.