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This page contains the regulations pertinent to EMTALA:
Selection from 42 CFR 482.12
Selections from 42 CFR 489.20
The full text of 42 CFR 489.24, as amended in 2000 and 2003
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Selection from 42 CFR 482.12

◆ 482.12 Condition of participation: Governing body.

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(f) Standard: Emergency services.

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(3) If emergency services are provided at the hospital but are not provided at one or more off-campus departments of the hospital, the governing body of the hospital must assure that the medical staff has written policies and procedures in effect with respect to the off-campus department(s) for appraisal of emergencies and referral when appropriate.

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Selections from 42 CFR 489.20 [including amendments adopted April 2000]

489.20 -- Basic Section 1866 commitments relevant to Section 1867 responsibilities.

The provider agrees to the following:

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(d) In the case of a hospital or a CAH that furnishes services to Medicare beneficiaries, either to furnish directly or to make arrangements (as defined in ◆ 409.3 of this chapter) for all Medicare covered services to inpatients and outpatients of a hospital or a CAH except the following:

* * *

(3) Nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialist services, as defined in section 1861(s)(2)(K)(ii) of the Act.

* * *

(l) In the case of a hospital as defined in 489.24(b), to comply with 489.24.

(m) In the case of a hospital as defined in 489.24(b), to report to HCFA or the State survey agency any time it has reason to believe it may have received an individual who has been transferred in an unstable emergency medical condition from another hospital in violation of the requirements of 489.24(d).

* * *

(q) In the case of a hospital as defined in 489.24(b)--

(1) To post conspicuously in any emergency department or in a place or places likely to be noticed by all individuals entering the emergency department, as well as those individuals waiting for examination and treatment in areas other than traditional emergency departments (that is, entrance, admitting area, waiting room, treatment area) a sign (in a form specified by the Secretary) specifying the rights of individuals under section 1867 of the Act with respect to examination and treatment for emergency medical conditions and women in labor; and

(2) To post conspicuously (in a form specified by the Secretary) information indicating whether or not the hospital or rural primary care hospital participates in the Medicaid program under a State plan approved under Title XIX;

* * *

(r) In the case of a hospital as defined in 489.24(b) (including both the transferring and receiving hospitals), to maintain--

(1) Medical and other records related to individuals transferred to or from the hospital for a period of 5 years from the date of the transfer;

(2) A list of physicians who are on call for duty after the initial examination to provide further evaluation and/or treatment necessary to stabilize an individual with an emergency medical condition; and

(3) A central log on each individual who "comes to the emergency department," as defined in 489.24(b), seeking assistance and whether he or she refused treatment, was refused treatment, or whether he or she was transferred, admitted and treated, stabilized and transferred, or discharged.

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THE PRIMARY REGULATION

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42 CFR 489.24 -- Special responsibilities of Medicare hospitals in emergency cases

(a) Applicability of provisions of this section.

(1) In the case of a hospital that has an emergency department, if an individual (whether or not eligible for Medicare benefits and regardless of ability to pay) "comes to the emergency department", as defined in paragraph (b) of this section, the hospital must

(i) Provide an appropriate medical screening examination within the capability of the hospital's emergency department, including ancillary services routinely available to the emergency department, to determine whether or not an emergency medical condition exists. The examination must be conducted by an individual(s) who is determined qualified by hospital bylaws or rules and regulations and who meets the requirements of 482.55 of this chapter concerning emergency services personnel and direction; and

(ii) If an emergency medical condition is determined to exist, provide any necessary stabilizing treatment, as defined in paragraph (d) of this section, or an appropriate transfer as defined in paragraph (e) of this section. If the hospital admits the individual as an inpatient for further treatment, the hospital's obligation under this section ends, as specified in paragraph (d)(2) of this section.

(2) Nonapplicability of provisions of this section. Sanctions under this section for inappropriate transfer during a national emergency do not apply to a hospital with a dedicated emergency department located in an emergency area, as specified in section 1135(g)(1) of the Act.

(b) Definitions. As used in this section

Capacity means the ability of the hospital to accommodate the individual requesting examination or treatment of the transferred individual. Capacity encompasses such things as numbers and availability of qualified staff, beds and equipment and the hospital's past practices of accommodating additional patients in excess of its occupancy limits.

Comes to the emergency department means, with respect to an individual who is not a patient (as defined in this section), the individual

(1) Has presented at a hospital's dedicated emergency department, as defined in this section, and requests examination or treatment for a medical condition, or has such a request made on his or her behalf. In the absence of such a request by or on behalf of the individual, a request on behalf of the individual will be considered to exist if a prudent layperson observer would believe, based on the individual's appearance or behavior, that the individual needs examination or treatment for a medical condition;

(2) Has presented on hospital property, as defined in this section, other than the dedicated emergency department, and requests examination or treatment for what may be an emergency medical condition, or has such a request made on his or her behalf. In the absence of such a request by or on behalf of the individual, a request on behalf of the individual will be considered

to exist if a prudent layperson observer would believe, based on the individual's appearance or behavior, that the individual needs emergency examination or treatment;

(3) Is in a ground or air ambulance owned and operated by the hospital for purposes of examination and treatment for a medical condition at a hospital's dedicated emergency department, even if the ambulance is not on hospital grounds. However, an individual in an ambulance owned and operated by the hospital is not considered to have "come to the hospital's emergency department" if

(i) The ambulance is operated under communitywide emergency medical service (EMS) protocols that direct it to transport the individual to a hospital other than the hospital that owns the ambulance; for example, to the closest appropriate facility. In this case, the individual is considered to have come to the emergency department of the hospital to which the individual is transported, at the time the individual is brought onto hospital property;

(ii) The ambulance is operated at the direction of a physician who is not employed or otherwise affiliated with the hospital that owns the ambulance; or

(4) Is in a ground or air nonhospital-owned ambulance on hospital property for presentation for examination and treatment for a medical condition at a hospital's dedicated emergency department. However, an individual in a nonhospital-owned ambulance off hospital property is not considered to have come to the hospital's emergency department, even if a member of the ambulance staff contacts the hospital by telephone or telemetry communications and informs the hospital that they want to transport the individual to the hospital for examination and treatment. The hospital may direct the ambulance to another facility if it is in "diversionary status," that is, it does not have the staff or facilities to accept any additional emergency patients. If, however, the ambulance staff disregards the hospital's diversion instructions and transports the individual onto hospital property, the individual is considered to have come to the emergency department.

Dedicated emergency department means any department or facility of the hospital, regardless of whether it is located on or off the main hospital campus, that meets at least one of the following requirements:

(1) It is licensed by the State in which it is located under applicable State law as an emergency room or emergency department;

(2) It is held out to the public (by name, posted signs, advertising, or other means) as a place that provides care for emergency medical conditions on an urgent basis without requiring a previously scheduled appointment; or

(3) During the calendar year immediately preceding the calendar year in which a determination under this section is being made, based on a representative sample of patient visits that occurred

during that calendar year, it provides at least one-third of all of its outpatient visits for the treatment of emergency medical conditions on an urgent basis without requiring a previously scheduled appointment.

Emergency medical condition means-

(i) A medical condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain, psychiatric disturbances and/or symptoms of substance abuse) such that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in-

(A) Placing the health of the individual (or, with respect to a pregnant woman, the health of the woman or her unborn child) in serious jeopardy;

(B) Serious impairment to bodily functions; or

(C) Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part; or

(ii) With respect to a pregnant woman who is having contractions-

(A) That there is inadequate time to effect a safe transfer to another hospital before delivery; or

(B) That transfer may pose a threat to the health or safety of the woman or the unborn child.

Hospital includes a rural primary care hospital as defined in section 1861(mm)(1) of the Act.

Hospital property means the entire main hospital campus as defined in [§ 413.65\(b\)](#) of this chapter, including the parking lot, sidewalk, and driveway, but excluding other areas or structures of the hospital's main building that are not part of the hospital, such as physician offices, rural health centers, skilled nursing facilities, or other entities that participate separately under Medicare, or restaurants, shops, or other nonmedical facilities.

Hospital with an emergency department means a hospital with a dedicated emergency department as defined in this paragraph (b). Inpatient means an individual who is admitted to a hospital for bed occupancy for purposes of receiving inpatient hospital services as described in [§ 409.10\(a\)](#) of this chapter with the expectation that he or she will remain at least overnight and occupy a bed even though the situation later develops that the individual can be discharged or transferred to another hospital and does not actually use a hospital bed overnight.

Labor means the process of childbirth beginning with the latent or early phase of labor and continuing through the delivery of the placenta. A woman experiencing contractions is in true labor unless a physician certifies that, after a reasonable time of observation, the woman is in false labor.

Participating hospital means (i) a hospital or (ii) a rural primary care hospital as defined in section 1861(mm)(1) of the Act that has entered into a Medicare provider agreement under section 1866 of the Act.

Patient means ♦

(1) An individual who has begun to receive outpatient services as part of an encounter, as defined in ♦ 410.2 of this chapter, other than an encounter that the hospital is obligated by this section to provide;

(2) An individual who has been admitted as an inpatient, as defined in this section.

Stabilized means, with respect to an "emergency medical condition" as defined in this section under paragraph (i) of that definition, that no material deterioration of the condition is likely, within reasonable medical probability, to result from or occur during the transfer of the individual from a facility or, with respect to an "emergency medical condition" as defined in this section under paragraph (ii) of that definition, that the woman has delivered the child and the placenta.

To stabilize means, with respect to an "emergency medical condition" as defined in this section under paragraph (i) of that definition, to provide such medical treatment of the condition necessary to assure, within reasonable medical probability, that no material deterioration of the condition is likely to result from or occur during the transfer of the individual from a facility or that, with respect to an "emergency medical condition" as defined in this section under paragraph (ii) of that definition, the woman has delivered the child and the placenta.

Transfer means the movement (including the discharge) of an individual outside a hospital's facilities at the direction of any person employed by (or affiliated or associated, directly or indirectly, with) the hospital, but does not include such a movement of an individual who (i) has been declared dead, or (ii) leaves the facility without the permission of any such person.

(c) Use of dedicated emergency department for nonemergency services. If an individual comes to a hospital ♦s dedicated emergency department and a request is made on his or her behalf for examination or treatment for a medical condition, but the nature of the request makes it clear that the medical condition is not of an emergency nature, the hospital is required only to perform such screening as would be appropriate for any individual presenting in that manner, to determine that the individual does not have an emergency medical condition.

(d) Necessary stabilizing treatment for emergency medical conditions. ♦

(1) General. Subject to the provisions of paragraph (d)(2) of this section, if any individual (whether or not eligible for Medicare benefits) comes to a hospital and the hospital determines that the individual has an emergency medical condition, the hospital must provide either ♦

(i) Within the capabilities of the staff and facilities available at the hospital, for further medical examination and treatment as required to stabilize the medical condition.

(ii) For transfer of the individual to another medical facility in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section.

(2) Exception: Application to inpatients.

(i) If a hospital has screened an individual under paragraph (a) of this section and found the individual to have an emergency medical condition, and admits that individual as an inpatient in good faith in order to stabilize the emergency medical condition, the hospital has satisfied its special responsibilities under this section with respect to that individual.

(ii) This section is not applicable to an inpatient who was admitted for elective (nonemergency) diagnosis or treatment.

(iii) A hospital is required by the conditions of participation for hospitals under Part 482 of this chapter to provide care to its inpatients in accordance with those conditions of participation.

(3) Refusal to consent to treatment. A hospital meets the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(i) of this section with respect to an individual if the hospital offers the individual the further medical examination and treatment described in that paragraph and informs the individual (or a person acting on the individual's behalf) of the risks and benefits to the individual of the examination and treatment, but the individual (or a person acting on the individual's behalf) does not consent to the examination or treatment. The medical record must contain a description of the examination, treatment, or both if applicable, that was refused by or on behalf of the individual. The hospital must take all reasonable steps to secure the individual's written informed refusal (or that of the person acting on his or her behalf). The written document should indicate that the person has been informed of the risks and benefits of the examination or treatment, or both.

(4) Delay in examination or treatment.

(i) A participating hospital may not delay providing an appropriate medical screening examination required under paragraph (a) of this section or further medical examination and treatment required under paragraph (d)(1) of this section in order to inquire about the individual's method of payment or insurance status.

(ii) A participating hospital may not seek, or direct an individual to seek, authorization from the individual's insurance company for screening or stabilization services to be furnished by a hospital, physician, or nonphysician practitioner to an individual until after the hospital has provided the appropriate medical screening examination required under paragraph (a) of this section, and initiated any further medical examination and treatment that may be required to stabilize the emergency medical condition under paragraph (d)(1) of this section.

(iii) An emergency physician or nonphysician practitioner is not precluded from contacting the individual's physician at any time to seek advice regarding the individual's medical history and needs that may be relevant to the medical treatment and screening of the patient, as long as this consultation does not inappropriately delay services required under paragraph (a) or paragraphs (d)(1) and (d)(2) of this section.

(iv) Hospitals may follow reasonable registration processes for individuals for whom examination or treatment is required by this section, including asking whether an individual is insured and, if so, what that insurance is, as long as that inquiry does not delay screening or treatment. Reasonable registration processes may not unduly discourage individuals from remaining for further evaluation.

(5) Refusal to consent to transfer. A hospital meets the requirements of paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section with respect to an individual if the hospital offers to transfer the individual to another medical facility in accordance with paragraph (e) of this section and informs the individual (or a person acting on his or her behalf) of the risks and benefits to the individual of the transfer, but the individual (or a person acting on the individual's behalf) does not consent to the transfer.

The hospital must take all reasonable steps to secure the individual's written informed refusal (or that of a person acting on his or her behalf). The written document must indicate the person has been informed of the risks and benefits of the transfer and state the reasons for the individual's refusal. The medical record must contain a description of the proposed transfer that was refused by or on behalf of the individual.

(e) Restricting transfer until the individual is stabilized-

(1) General.

If an individual at a hospital has an emergency medical condition that has not been stabilized (as defined in paragraph (b) of this section), the hospital may not transfer the individual unless-

(i) The transfer is an appropriate transfer (within the meaning of paragraph (d)(2) of this section); and

(ii)(A) The individual (or a legally responsible person acting on the individual's behalf) requests the transfer, after being informed of the hospital's obligations under this section and of the risk of transfer. The request must be in writing and indicate the reasons for the request as well as indicate that he or she is aware of the risks and benefits of the transfer;

(B) A physician (within the meaning of section 1861(r)(1) of the Act) has signed a certification that, based upon the information available at the time of transfer, the medical benefits reasonably expected from the provision of appropriate medical treatment at another medical facility outweigh the increased risks to the individual or, in the case of a woman in labor, to the woman or the unborn child, from being transferred. The certification must contain a summary of the risks and benefits upon which it is based; or

(C) If a physician is not physically present in the emergency department at the time an individual is transferred, a qualified medical person (as determined by the hospital in its bylaws or rules and regulations) has signed a certification described in paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(B) of this section after a physician (as defined in section 1861(r)(1) of the Act) in consultation with the qualified medical person, agrees with the certification and subsequently countersigns the certification. The certification must contain a summary of the risks and benefits upon which it is based.

(2) A transfer to another medical facility will be appropriate only in those cases in which-

(i) The transferring hospital provides medical treatment within its capacity that minimizes the risks to the individual's health and, in the case of a woman in labor, the health of the unborn child;

(ii) The receiving facility-

(A) Has available space and qualified personnel for the treatment of the individual; and

(B) Has agreed to accept transfer of the individual and to provide appropriate medical treatment;

(iii) The transferring hospital sends to the receiving facility all medical records (or copies thereof) related to the emergency condition which the individual has presented that are available at the time of the transfer, including available history, records related to the individual's emergency medical condition, observations of signs or symptoms, preliminary diagnosis, results of diagnostic studies or telephone reports of the studies, treatment provided, results of any tests and the informed written consent or certification (or copy thereof) required under paragraph (d)(1)(ii) of this section, and the name and address of any on-call physician (described in paragraph (f) of this section) who has refused or failed to appear within a reasonable time to provide necessary stabilizing treatment. Other records (e.g., test results not yet available or historical records not readily available from the hospital's files) must be sent as soon as practicable after transfer; and

(iv) The transfer is effected through qualified personnel and transportation equipment, as required, including the use of necessary and medically appropriate life support measures during the transfer.

(3) A participating hospital may not penalize or take adverse action against a physician or a qualified medical person described in paragraph (d)(1)(ii)(C) of this section because the physician or qualified medical person refuses to authorize the transfer of an individual with an emergency medical condition that has not been stabilized, or against any hospital employee because the employee reports a violation of a requirement of this section.

(f) Recipient hospital responsibilities.

A participating hospital that has specialized capabilities or facilities (including, but not limited to, facilities such as burn units, shock-trauma units, neonatal intensive care units, or (with respect to rural areas) regional referral centers) may not refuse to accept from a referring hospital within

the boundaries of the United States an appropriate transfer of an individual who requires such specialized capabilities or facilities if the receiving hospital has the capacity to treat the individual.

(g) Termination of provider agreement.

If a hospital fails to meet the requirements of paragraph (a) through (e) of this section, HCFA may terminate the provider agreement in accordance with 489.53.

(h) Consultation with Peer Review Organizations (PROs)-

(1) General.

Except as provided in paragraph (g)(3) of this section, in cases where a medical opinion is necessary to determine a physician's or hospital's liability under section 1867(d)(1) of the Act, HCFA requests the appropriate PRO (with a contract under Part B of title XI of the Act) to review the alleged section 1867(d) violation and provide a report on its findings in accordance with paragraph (g)(2)(iv) and (v) of this section. HCFA provides to the PRO all information relevant to the case and within its possession or control. HCFA, in consultation with the OIG, also provides to the PRO a list of relevant questions to which the PRO must respond in its report.

(2) Notice of review and opportunity for discussion and additional information.

The PRO shall provide the physician and hospital reasonable notice of its review, a reasonable opportunity for discussion, and an opportunity for the physician and hospital to submit additional information before issuing its report.

When a PRO receives a request for consultation under paragraph (g)(1) of this section, the following provisions apply-

(i) The PRO reviews the case before the 15th calendar day and makes its tentative findings.

(ii) Within 15 calendar days of receiving the case, the PRO gives written notice, sent by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the physician or the hospital (or both if applicable).

(iii) (A) The written notice must contain the following information:

(1) The name of each individual who may have been the subject of the alleged violation.

(2) The date on which each alleged violation occurred.

(3) An invitation to meet, either by telephone or in person, to discuss the case with the PRO, and to submit additional information to the PRO within 30 calendar days of receipt of the notice, and a statement that these rights will be waived if the invitation is not accepted. The PRO must receive the information and hold the meeting within the 30-day period.

(4) A copy of the regulations at 42 CFR 489.24.

(B) For purposes of paragraph (g)(2)(iii)(A) of this section, the date of receipt is presumed to be 5 days after the certified mail date on the notice, unless there is a reasonable showing to the contrary.

(iv) The physician or hospital (or both where applicable) may request a meeting with the PRO. This meeting is not designed to be a formal adversarial hearing or a mechanism for discovery by the physician or hospital. The meeting is intended to afford the physician and/or the hospital a full and fair opportunity to present the views of the physician and/or hospital regarding the case. The following provisions apply to that meeting:

(A) The physician and/or hospital has the right to have legal counsel present during that meeting. However, the PRO may control the scope, extent, and manner of any questioning or any other presentation by the attorney. The PRO may also have legal counsel present.

(B) The PRO makes arrangements so that, if requested by HCFA or the OIG, a verbatim transcript of the meeting may be generated.

If HCFA or OIG requests a transcript, the affected physician and/or the affected hospital may request that HCFA provide a copy of the transcript.

(C) The PRO affords the physician and/or the hospital an opportunity to present, with the assistance of counsel, expert testimony in either oral or written form on the medical issues presented. However, the PRO may reasonably limit the number of witnesses and length of such testimony if such testimony is irrelevant or repetitive. The physician and/or hospital, directly or through counsel, may disclose patient records to potential expert witnesses without violating any non-disclosure requirements set forth in part 476 of this chapter.

(D) The PRO is not obligated to consider any additional information provided by the physician and/or the hospital after the meeting, unless, before the end of the meeting, the PRO requests that the physician and/or hospital submit additional information to support the claims. The PRO then allows the physician and/or the hospital an additional period of time, not to exceed 5 calendar days from the meeting, to submit the relevant information to the PRO.

(v) Within 60 calendar days of receiving the case, the PRO must submit to HCFA a report on the PRO's findings. HCFA provides copies to the OIG and to the affected physician and/or the affected hospital. The report must contain the name of the physician and/or the hospital, the name of the individual, and the dates and times the individual arrived at and was transferred (or discharged) from the hospital. The report provides expert medical opinion regarding whether the individual involved had an emergency medical condition, whether the individual's emergency medical condition was stabilized, whether the individual was transferred appropriately, and whether there were any medical utilization or quality of care issues involved in the case.

(vi) The report required under paragraph (g)(2)(v) of this section should not state an opinion or conclusion as to whether section 1867 of the Act or 489.24 has been violated.

(3) If a delay would jeopardize the health or safety of individuals or when there was no screening examination, the PRO review described in this section is not required before the OIG may impose civil monetary penalties or an exclusion in accordance with section 1867(d)(1) of the Act and 42 CFR part 1003 of this title.

(4) If the PRO determines after a preliminary review that there was an appropriate medical screening examination and the individual did not have an emergency medical condition, as defined by paragraph (b) of this section, then the PRO may, at its discretion, return the case to HCFA and not meet the requirements of paragraph (g) except for those in paragraph (g)(2)(v).

(i) Release of PRO assessments.

Upon request, HCFA may release a PRO assessment to the physician and/or hospital, or the affected individual, or his or her representative. The PRO physician's identity is confidential unless he or she consents to its release.

(j) Availability of on-call physicians.

(1) Each hospital must maintain an oncall list of physicians on its medical staff in a manner that best meets the needs of the hospital's patients who are receiving services required under this section in accordance with the resources available to the hospital, including the availability of on-call physicians.

(2) The hospital must have written policies and procedures in place

(i) To respond to situations in which a particular specialty is not available or the on-call physician cannot respond because of circumstances beyond the physician's control; and

(ii) To provide that emergency services are available to meet the needs of patients with emergency medical conditions if it elects to permit on-call physicians to schedule elective surgery during the time that they are on call or to permit on-call physicians to have simultaneous on-call duties.