

PREHOSPITAL POLICY

Policy Reference No: 108
Effective Date: 3/1/97
Supersedes: 10/1/93

SUBJECT: ORGAN DONOR PROCUREMENT POLICY

I. AUTHORITY:

Health and Safety Code Section 7152.5 (b)

II. PURPOSE:

To establish guidelines for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) field personnel to meet legislative requirements that they search for organ donor information on adult patients for whom death appears imminent.

III. DEFINITIONS:

A. "Reasonable Search" - A brief attempt by EMS field personnel to locate documentation that may identify a patient as a potential donor, or one who has refused to make an anatomical gift. This search shall be limited to a wallet or purse that is on or near the individual to locate a driver's license or other identification card with donor status information. This requirement may be met by asking a family member, if one is present, about the existence of an organ donor card when conditions are conducive to such an interview. No search shall be made on the victim/possessions of a suspected crime or attempted suicide. A reasonable search shall not take precedence over patient care or treatment.

County Health Officer

Date

Executive Director, Emergency Medical Services Agency

Date

Medical Director, Emergency Medical Services Agency

Date

- B. "Imminent Death" - A condition wherein illness or injuries are of such severity that in the opinion of EMS personnel, death is likely to occur before the patient arrives at the receiving hospital. For purposes of this policy, this definition does not include any conscious patient, regardless of the severity of illness or injury.
- C. "Adult" - A person 18 years or older, or who reasonably appears to be 18 years or older in the opinion of the field personnel in the absence of verifiable proof.

IV. POLICY/PROCEDURE:

- A. When EMS field personnel encounter an unconscious adult patient for whom it appears death imminent (that is, death prior to the arrival of the patient at a receiving facility), they shall attempt a "reasonable search" of the patient's belongings to determine if the individual carries information indicating the patient's status as an organ donor. This search must be done in the presence of a witness, preferably a public safety officer.
- B. Treatment and transport of the patient remains the highest priority for field personnel. This search shall not interfere with patient care or transport.
- C. Field personnel shall notify the receiving hospital personnel if organ donor information is discovered. Advanced Life Support units shall notify their base hospital in addition to the receiving hospital personnel.
- D. Any organ donor document that is discovered should be transported to the receiving hospital with the patient unless it is requested by the investigating law enforcement officer. In the event that no transport is made, any document should remain with the patient.
- E. Field personnel should briefly note the results of the search, notification of hospital, and witness name(s) on the EMS Run Report.
- F. No search is to be made by EMS personnel after the patient has obviously expired.
- G. If a member of the patient's immediate family objects to the search for an organ donor document at the scene, their response to a question about the patient's organ donation wishes may be considered to satisfy the requirement.