

**OKALOOSA COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

Title: Conflict Resolution
Policy: 104.00
Purpose: To provide guidelines for the documentation and resolution of incidents.

Policy:

Definition of Incidents

- Any incident which may have the potential of developing into a professional and /or general liability issue.
- Internal complaints (complaints by and about an OCEMS employee)
- External complaints (complaints involving a non-OCEMS employee)
- Vehicle accident while on duty
- Vehicle/ equipment failures whether or not it was being used for patient care
- Inadequate vehicle condition
- Missing, damaged equipment or vehicle
- To document disagreements/deviations from OCEMS policy
- Patient related incidents (e.g. falls, injuries, etc.). See first bullet
- Work related injury/illness
- To document other unusual circumstances or events as warranted

Serious incidents are defined as any incident which, if not acted upon, has the potential to cause significant harm to the Okaloosa County BCC, Department of Public Safety, EMS Division, or an associate or other individual. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Claims of harassment, sexual or otherwise
- Claims of commission of a criminal act
- Claims of assault, verbal or physical, involving an OCEMS employee
- Claims of injury incurred while working, involving an OCEMS employee
- Claims of improper medical treatment or care which might lead to an unfavorable patient outcome
- Claims of discrimination addressed by law

Incident Reporting

If an incident occurs, OCEMS requires employees to report it within 24 hours of the incident and prior to the completion of the current shift. Reports must be entered into the incident reporting system. Serious incidents involving possible injury, claims of harassment or criminal acts should be IMMEDIATELY reportedly verbally to your immediate supervisor. If you are not comfortable reporting the incident to the immediate supervisor, report the incident to the Human Resources office.

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Writing Incident Reports

When documenting an incident, it is very important to differentiate between fact and opinion. Facts are things you can prove, based on available data. You may be asked to prove anything you state as fact in an incident report. Opinions should be omitted from incident reports, but must be clearly stated as opinion if it is necessary to include them.

When documenting an incident report, answer the five W's: who, what, why, when and where. If you are sharing information that was provided to you and is unverified, clearly state that and answer the five W's: who told you, what they told you, why they told you (circumstances of the conversation, etc.), when they told you, and where you were when they told you.

Although most people know the importance of documenting an incident it is equally important to document where an incident occurred or where you were when you learned of the incident. It is difficult to know what information will be important to an investigation when writing an incident report, so include as much detail as possible.

Investigation of Complaints

All legitimate complaints will be investigated according to the seriousness of the complaint. Investigation of general complaints will be the responsibility of the supervisor of the involved shift/ personnel, although the EMS Chief may choose to delegate the investigation process to a different supervisor. Any serious incidents (defined above) shall be immediately reported verbally to the EMS Chief.

An investigation will involve the taking of statements from involved parties and an objective review of any evidence available. Examples of evidence to be examined may include, but is not limited to:

- CAD records
- Vehicle tracking records
- Patient care reports
- Video recordings from security cameras or Law Enforcement / Audio recordings from Communications Division phone lines or radio traffic
- Data logs recorded by medical equipment (ECG files, timestamps)
- Any forms or documents involved
- County cellular and land-line phone records.

Results of an investigation shall be reported to the individual filing the original complaint whenever doing so would not compromise patient or employee confidentiality concerns.

Complaints Against Outside Agencies

If you have a complaint against another healthcare agency or associate of another healthcare agency, bring it to the attention of your immediate supervisor. The information will be forwarded to the other agency involved so that correction may be made within the structure of their organization. Follow-up provided by the other agency will be shared with the reporting employee whenever doing so would not compromise patient or employee confidentiality concerns.

Receiving Complaints

If a complaint is received from an outside agency or the public, the OCEMS employee or supervisor receiving the complaint should listen carefully and document the complaint and contact information of the person making the complaint. Confirm that your contact information is correct before ending the conversation.

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Once the complaint has been received assure the person making the complaint that their concern will be investigated and that a member of management will follow up with them as soon as possible.

Complaints from an outside agency or the public should be entered into the incident reporting system for investigation and follow up.

Internal Conflicts

Conflict exists in every organization and to a certain extent indicates a healthy exchange of ideas and creativity. However, counter-productive conflict can result in employee dissatisfaction, reduced productivity, poor patient care, absenteeism and increased employee turnover, increased work-related stress and litigation in some cases. OCEMS will promote an open communications process while fostering a safe environment for addressing differences of opinions. Retribution for raising legitimate complaints and concerns will not be tolerated. Employees are first encouraged to attempt to resolve differences without the involvement of management were possible. The EMS Chief and designated supervisors will implement a progression of interventions, escalating the involvement of management and formal procedures based on the seriousness of the conflict and the inability of the parties to resolve differences on their own.

Conflict Resolution

Once an investigation has been completed, the information will be used by management in making a determination on how best to handle the complaint. Conflict resolution strategies shall focus on identifying opportunities for performance improvement and/or reduction of risk to the organization and associates. Conflict resolution strategies shall avoid focusing on defining which party was “right” vs. “wrong” and instead focus on future prevention of similar conflicts. Conflict resolution might include, but is not limited to:

- Informal verbal conversation with involved parties to set expectations and share viewpoints
- Formal written statements and follow up meetings with involved parties.
- Informal agreements on future expectations for conduct / behavior
- Formal written notification of expectations for future conduct/ behavior
- Disciplinary action up to and including termination
- Remediation
- Informal or formal apologies

The individual completing the investigation is responsible for documenting the conclusions and actions taken in the incident reporting system and closing out the incident when appropriate.

Feedback to involved parties

The results of investigation of complaints shall be shared with the complainant and other involved parties whenever doing so will not disclose confidential or protected information. If specifics of an investigation cannot be shared with involved parties, parties shall be informed that the investigation has concluded, but that due to confidentiality concerns, no further details can be shared.

Filing a grievance or disputing a disciplinary decision

If an employee wishes to contest a disciplinary decision, they may do so in accordance with Chapter XXI – Grievance/Appeal Procedure of the Okaloosa County Human Resources Policy Manual.

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Accountability and Compliance:

It is the responsibility of all employees to report incidents according to the definitions and procedures outlined in this policy. Sound professional reasoning and judgment are expected when a question exists as to the worthiness of reporting when an issue is not stipulated in this document.

A copy of the incident report/complaints will be kept on file in the EMS division. Any additional similar occurrences will be noted as a repeat occurrence and be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Tracking and Trending of Complaints

1. As outlined above, complaints are tracked utilizing a computerized logging system. After appropriate routing to the correct supervisor, the Shift Commander is charged with reviewing all complaints for trends and making improvements/implementing changes as necessary.
2. A full review of all customer feedback will be done every three months and any actions taken will be recorded and forwarded to the EMS Chief at the Senior Staff Meeting. This report will be titled 'Incident Reporting' and will consist of data from a rolling 12-month period.

Policy #: 104.00
CAAS: 102.03.01
Author: Bailey
Reviewed: Leadership
Approved: Leadership
Status: Active
Effective Date: 02/23/16
Revision Date: 02/23/16