



## MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES BULLETIN

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA \* DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

DATE OF ISSUE

OCTOBER 29, 2004

EFFECTIVE DATE

Immediately

NUMBER

SMH-04-01

**SUBJECT**

Transporting Patients

**BY:**

Joan L. Erney, JD  
Deputy Secretary for Mental Health  
and Substance Abuse Services

**SCOPE:** State Mental Health Facilities

**PURPOSE:** To establish Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services policy for the management of potential risks in transporting patients for planned, non-emergency events by motor vehicle, train, aircraft or other passenger carrier.

**BACKGROUND:** This policy bulletin was prepared in response to a need for revision and clarification of a previous bulletin entitled "Transporting Patients", SMH-97-05, which shall be obsolete with issue of this bulletin.

**POLICY:** Each state mental health facility shall identify the process to evaluate patient condition and address appropriate accommodations for transporting patients which insures the safety and comfort of the patients and other vehicle occupants. Patient transportation may include state vehicles operated by a Commonwealth employee, hospital approved contract employees, hospital approved volunteers, privately owned vehicles operated by volunteers or employees acting in the capacity of volunteer, family members or friends of the patient, or commercial carriers such as buses, taxicabs, trains, aircraft, or watercraft.

Hospitals which permit volunteers to transport patients in private vehicles must establish a procedure with appropriate risk management safeguards for this practice which includes informing the volunteers of the vehicle insurance requirements contained in the DPW Administrative Manual Section 7051 and verifying compliance by any volunteers transporting patients in their vehicles.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

Director, Bureau of Hospital Operations  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Beechmont Building, P.O. Box 2675  
Harrisburg, PA 17105  
717-705-8153

Each state mental health facility shall adhere to the following provisions:

1. Each patient's medical record shall contain a designation of any restrictions or required accommodations for transportation of the patient. This documentation shall be reflected on the patient's individualized treatment plan and updated as needed .
2. The determination of the patient's physical and emotional needs for transportation shall be made by the patient's physician based upon the physician's evaluation and the treatment team members' evaluations and recommendations at the time of the admission assessment, monthly treatment plan review, and annual assessment. Hospitals may choose to require a physician assessment, physician order, and documentation for each planned trip with the consideration of current patient condition, means of transportation, and destination within 24 hours of the scheduled event.
3. The hospital procedure for transporting patients shall address the specific steps to be implemented when a patient's physical and/or emotional condition significantly changes.
4. An unusual transportation event may require a special physician assessment and accommodations. Circumstances may include trips of unusual time duration, unfamiliar means of transportation such as air travel, or a destination which may create increased anxiety and/or risk for a patient, such as an amusement park, isolated park area, or site of court proceedings or unfamiliar, fearful medical procedures.
5. The patient's treatment team, including the attending physician, shall review and approve all requests for on- or off-grounds transportation by volunteers.
6. Volunteers permitted by the facility to transport patients in their private vehicles shall be subject to the following requirements/provisions prior to any transportation event:
  - a. Registration with the hospital Volunteer Resource Department;
  - b. Completion of the facility volunteer orientation program;
  - c. Provide a copy of their valid driver's license;
  - d. Provide a copy of their current automobile insurance (Note: volunteers must carry, at their own expense, at least the minimum amount of automobile liability and property damage insurance coverage as defined in the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Financial Responsibility Law);
  - e. Volunteers shall be informed that they are not covered by the Commonwealth Employees Liability Self-Insurance Program regarding liability for an automobile accident;
  - f. Volunteers shall be advised of their duty to adhere to all existing Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle laws and regulations including, but not limited to: use of seat belts, vehicle registration and inspection, observance of posted speed limits, etc.
  - g. Volunteers shall be advised of their responsibility to operate their vehicle in a safe manner at all times and to take appropriate safety measures and refrain from cellular telephone use while operating the vehicle;
  - h. Volunteers shall be advised that it is their explicit responsibility to immediately report any changes in their licensing status (i.e., violations, suspensions, etc.), insurance coverage, and/or vehicle registration to the Volunteer Resources Director prior to any further transportation events; and

- i. Volunteers shall be advised of the requirement for reporting any accident pursuant to Pennsylvania law and facility policy.

**OBSOLETE BULLETIN:**

This Bulletin replaces State Mental Hospital Bulletin number SMH-97-05 entitled "Transporting Patients" which is obsolete.