

SANTA CLARA POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 96.4

PROTOCOL FOR FAMILY NOTIFICATION

ISSUED APRIL 2006

96.4.1 Purpose

A local county-wide model for systematic family notification when a person in custody is placed under medical care by law enforcement officials was developed and adopted by Santa Clara County agencies in 1996. This policy will insure that relatives are notified in a timely manner when an arrestee is placed into a medical facility by police officials. This policy contains actions and responsibilities of the medical facility, police agency, and coroner's office.

96.4.2 Patient Identification

The hospital will identify incoming patients to the Emergency Department.

Every effort shall be made to identify an unaccompanied, unconscious, or incompetent unidentified patient as soon as possible in order to notify family members.

The process of patient identification shall be clearly documented in the medical record.

Whenever necessary, the hospital shall contact the Law Enforcement agency where the patient was found, to assist in the identification process.

As necessary, the hospital shall notify the public relations department to utilize the media in assisting in patient identification.

96.4.3 Law Enforcement Investigations

When there is a police investigation involved, the hospital will document the officer's name, badge number and the case number (if available) in the medical record. The officer/investigator will provide all assistance possible to the hospital personnel trying to establish the identity of a patient under these circumstances.

96.4.4 Family Notification

The hospital shall notify the patient's family as soon as possible.

At no time is treatment withheld pending consent from the next of kin.

The process of family notification shall be clearly documented in the medical record.

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When the patient is in the custody of Law Enforcement, the family will be notified after permission has been obtained from Law Enforcement.

This policy recognizes the right of Law Enforcement to request that the hospital delay notification to the next of kin for investigative purposes, or because of a substantial risk to the patient and/or hospital personnel. Under these circumstances, the requesting Law Enforcement officer shall notify the hospital when the next of kin can be notified.

96.4.5 Coroner Notification

The hospital shall notify the coroner of any patient “dead on arrival” (DOA) or “dead after admission” (DAA) to the Emergency Department.

The date and time the coroner was notified, and the name of the individual taking the information at the coroner’s office shall be documented on the post-mortem record.

When Law Enforcement request that the hospital delay notification to the coroner until a law enforcement field investigator has viewed the body and retrieved the evidence, or for safety and security issues, the requesting Law Enforcement officer shall take full responsibility for notifying the coroner.

The hospital will document the request, the officer’s name and badge number, the date and time on the post-mortem record.

DOA/DAA Cases: In compliance with Government Code Sections 27491 and 27491.1 and Health and Safety Code Section 10250, the coroner must be notified of all deaths in the Emergency Department. A person who does not notify the coroner as required in these sections is guilty of a misdemeanor.

96.4.6 Law Enforcement Notification

When the patient is part of an ongoing police investigation the hospital shall notify the responsible Law Enforcement agency when a patient expires. The Law Enforcement agency notified shall be the agency that responded to and recorded the patient’s incident.

96.4.7 Patient or Employee Questioning by Law Enforcement Agencies

A Law Enforcement officer needing to question a patient or employee shall notify the hospital prior to making contact with the patient or employee. This notification shall be made to Hospital Administration.