

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION  
CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES  
Health Care Department Operations Manual

**2.3.15 Headquarters Patient Health Care Inquiry Response**

**(a) Policy**

- (1) Health Care Correspondence and Appeals Branch (HCCAB), California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS), shall provide timely and appropriate responses to patient health care inquiries submitted to CCHCS. Health care inquiries from patients under California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) jurisdiction may be received through written correspondence. Patient-submitted health care inquiries are limited to issues that cannot be addressed through the Health Care Grievance Process and must be submitted through written correspondence. Health care inquiries from other parties may be received through written correspondence or verbal messages left on the Patient Health Care Inquiry Line (Hotline).
- (2) HCCAB shall adhere to all applicable federal laws and requirements, state statutes and regulations, and CCHCS policies and procedures that protect patient privacy, confidentiality, access to, use, and disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI). The health care inquiry process is not the correct venue to submit an Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information form.

**(b) Purpose**

To maintain a process for patients and other parties to report patient-specific health care and treatment concerns and ensure that timely and appropriate responses are provided to health care inquiries while abiding by all federal and state laws.

**(c) Responsibility**

The Deputy Director, Policy and Risk Management Services, shall ensure compliance with this policy and procedure.

**(d) Procedure**

**(1) Timeframes**

Timeframes for processing health care inquiries commence upon the date of receipt by HCCAB. Every effort shall be made to respond within the following timeframes:

- (A) Hotline messages: verbal response - 15 business days.
- (B) Correspondence: written response - 45 business days.

**(2) Triage**

Health care staff at a level no less than a Registered Nurse, utilizing clinical expertise within his or her licensure, shall triage each health care inquiry within one business day of receipt to determine if the health care inquiry contains an urgent/emergent health care issue that may require clinical intervention.

- (A) Urgent/emergent medical, mental health, and dental clinical needs shall be immediately referred to the appropriate clinician for evaluation consistent with established program guidelines and the Health Care Department Operations Manual, Section 3.1.5, Scheduling and Access to Care.
- (B) Urgent/emergent issues that cannot be immediately resolved or require follow-up shall be referred to appropriate executive health care staff, or designee, for review and/or action.

**(3) Research and Response**

(A) The headquarters HCCAB Case Managers shall:

1. Follow established procedures pertaining to researching and obtaining health care information.
2. Provide written and verbal responses in compliance with all applicable federal laws and requirements, state statutes and regulations, and CCHCS policies and procedures that protect patient privacy, confidentiality, and access to, use, and disclosure of PHI.

(B) The Case Managers are not licensed clinical staff and cannot provide detailed clinical information; however, general health care information will be provided to those with a valid Release of Information in the patient's health record.

(C) No response will be provided to hotline messages that contain threatening, obscene, demeaning, or abusive language.

**References**

- Code of Federal Regulations, Title 45, Section 164.508 et seq., Uses and Disclosures for which an Authorization is Required
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- California Civil Code, Section 56 et seq., Confidentiality of Medical Information Act

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- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department Operations Manual, Chapter 9, Article 7, Sections 91070.8 - 91070.8.9
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department Operations Manual, Chapter 5, Article 41, Section 54010.1
- Health Care Department Operations Manual, Chapter 2, Article 2, Section 2.2.2, Use and Disclosure of Protected Health Information Based on Patient Authorization
- Health Care Department Operations Manual, Chapter 2, Article 3, Section 2.3.14, Release of Health Information Family or Friend Access
- Health Care Department Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Article 1, Section 3.1.5, Scheduling and Access to Care

**Revision History**

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