

**Commonwealth of Virginia**  
Department of Health  
**State Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board**

**STATE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**  
**POSITION PAPER ON EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OVERCROWDING**  
**AND ITS IMPACT ON SAFE PATIENT CARE**

The Commonwealth of Virginia Governor’s EMS Advisory Board (GAB) recognizes the strain that EMS agencies and hospitals face daily. ED overcrowding is impacting safe care of patients. The GAB believes:

1. Patient centered outcomes should guide policies and practices
2. Patients arriving via EMS should not be asked to wait on or off property before entering the ED to receive timely and appropriate medical screening exam. EMS may enter the facility immediately regardless of any such request from the facility
3. In accordance with federal regulation, the hospital has responsibility for the patient once patient presents to the facility
  - a. Presentation is defined as within 250 yards of the hospital campus
  - b. Hospitals should develop processes to assure the same standard of care for patients who walk into the ED and for those transported by EMS
4. Diversion is not an effective tool to reduce ED overcrowding
  - a. Hospitals should have the ability to “close” in events where facilities have loss of critical infrastructure (e.g. loss of power, loss of water, loss of CT capability) or potential for life safety issues (e.g. fire, active shooter)
  - b. If facilities have a diversion policy, it is only a request which EMS may decline
  - c. Hospitals should not enact diversion if the facility is accepting patients via other entry points into the health system (walk ins, transfers)
5. Hospitals should work to reduce ambulance wall times in the ED to allow EMS to provide services in their respective communities
6. EMS holding is a courtesy by EMS agencies in partnership with hospitals, as EMS resources allow. Hospitals should be prepared to immediately assume care to any patient presenting to the emergency department regardless of mode of arrival
7. EMS providers are encouraged to advocate for their patients, particularly when a patient requires urgent or immediate intervention

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