



**Policy Type:** Board

**Category:** Public Safety

**Policy Name:** Santa Clara County Protocol for Family Notification - Board Policy 3.21

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## **3.21 SANTA CLARA COUNTY PROTOCOL FOR FAMILY NOTIFICATION (Adopted 2-11-97)**

### **3.21.1 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 having jurisdiction over the area 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.



### **3.21.2 Law Enforcement Investigations**

When there is a patient involved in a police investigation, the hospital will document the officer's name, badge number and the case number (if available) in the medical record.

### **3.21.3 Family Notification**

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

- At no time is treatment withheld in the case of a life threatening emergency due to lack of parental consent, or notification to the next of kin.
- The process of family notification shall be clearly documented in the medical record.
- When the patient is in the custody of Law Enforcement, the family will be notified after permission has been obtained from Law Enforcement.
- These guidelines recognize 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.

### **3.21.4 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, the name of the person notifying the coroner, 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 evidence, the requesting Law Enforcement officer shall take full responsibility for notifying the coroner.
- The hospital will document the officer's request, the officer's name and badge number, and the date and time of the request on the post mortem record.
- The responsible officer shall notify the hospital when the coroner has been notified, and the date and time of coroner notification shall be documented 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.



**3.21.5 Law Enforcement Notification**

When the patient is part of an ongoing police investigation, the hospital shall notify the responsible Law Enforcement agency of the patient’s death within one hour of the demise.

- The Law Enforcement agency notified shall be the agency that responded to and recorded the patient’s incident.

**3.21.6 Patient or Employee Questioning by Law Enforcement Agencies**

A Law Enforcement officer meeting to question a patient or employee shall notify the hospital prior to making contact with the patient or employee.

- Law Enforcement notification shall be made to hospital in order that they may facilitate the questioning process

**Related Policies**

None.

**Related Forms and Information**

None.

**History**

Date	Changes Made
1/24/2014	Policy Uploaded. (John Myers)
2/11/1997	Policy Adopted.