

Policy Statement

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Violence Prevention and Intervention in Emergency Medical Services Systems

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Violence Prevention and Intervention in Emergency Medical Services Systems



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The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) reaffirms that emergency medical services (EMS) systems provide essential health care elements in the health and well-being of communities. With innovative, involved, physician medical oversight, EMS is capable of serving multiple roles across the spectrum of public health and public safety.

ACEP believes that optimal EMS medical care can only be achieved when patients, EMS professionals, and all other persons in the EMS care environment are protected against violent acts. Such acts constitute a preventable and significant public health problem.

As such, ACEP advocates specific violence preventions and interventions in EMS beyond the “awareness-level” education that historically has largely constituted EMS violence-related initiatives.

Furthermore, ACEP strongly encourages all states to enact legislation that provides the maximum category of offense and criminal penalty against individuals who consciously commit violence against EMS and all health care professionals.

To promote safety and security in the EMS environment, ACEP believes in supporting violence prevention and intervention initiatives that include the following:

- Attaining and maintaining an EMS culture of patient and personnel safety, based on community- and system-specific risk assessments that include

- o adequate staffing of professionals on emergency apparatus;
- o sufficient training for professionals in violence risk assessment, violence avoidance and de-escalation maneuvers, self-defense tactics, and patient and colleague defense tactics;
- o provision, training, and use of devices designed as physical barriers against bodily injury;
- o provision of other security components deemed essential in collaboration with violence and law enforcement experts; and
- o periodic assessments to measure compliance and effectiveness of violence-related initiatives;
- Coordinating with applicable law enforcement agencies to provide rapid response of law enforcement officers to EMS patients, EMS professionals, or both in distress related to violence
- Developing written operational protocols, with relevant input from EMS professionals, for violent situations occurring in the EMS environment
- Developing and enforcing mandatory reporting policies that require EMS professionals to promptly report verbal and physical assaults to a clearly defined authority established by applicable law and within EMS system policy, with such policies clearly stating that reporting will not result in any adverse action by the EMS system such as termination, threatening to terminate, demoting, suspending, or in any manner discriminating against an EMS professional who reports an assault in good faith

- Adopting a zero-tolerance policy for violence against EMS professionals, patients, and others in the EMS environment, including informing EMS professionals that any assault is not considered “part of the job”
- Providing appropriate postincident support for EMS professionals involved in violent events, including

prompt medical treatment, debriefing options, counseling resources, and professional assistance as indicated

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