

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

SUBJECT: IDENTIFICATION OF AN UNIDENTIFIED PATIENT

POLICY NO. 339

PURPOSE:

To establish the procedure for attempting to identify a John or Jane Doe patient.

POLICY:

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center must begin the process to identify an unidentified patient as soon as possible after the patient arrives at the Emergency Room or is admitted to the hospital.

PROCEDURE:

The identification process is a cooperative effort by the LA County Sheriff, Emergency Department, Clinical Social Work, Inpatient Nursing Units, Administration, Bed Control, Telephone Operators, Patient Information, Registration and Health Information Management. The identification process will be monitored through all its phases and the progress documented in the patient's medical record until the patient is either identified or discharged.

1. Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM) Nursing

1. When a patient whose medical or mental condition precludes self-identification arrives in the Emergency Room, look through the patient's clothing and personal belongings for possible sources of identification.
2. Notify the LA County Sheriff's Department of all unidentified patients with an injury-related diagnosis.
3. When an unidentified patient's identity becomes known, notify Registration immediately.

2. Registration

1. If DEM Nursing is unable to determine a patient's identity upon arrival, Registration will admit the patient as an unidentified patient.
2. Registration will assign a Medical Record Number (MRUN) and input in the Memo Section of the Registration Screen of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) a description of the patient, including:
 - Eye color
 - Hair color
 - Height
 - Weight
 - Where patient was found
 - Any other identifier

EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/89

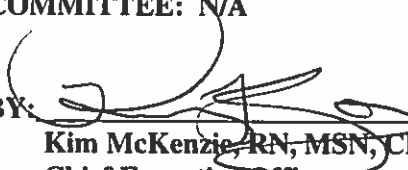
SUPERSEDES:

REVISED: 4/91, 11/95, 12/98, 3/99, 1/03, 2/05, 10/07, 5/14, 2/19

REVIEWED: 9/89, 4/91, 10/92, 11/95, 12/98, 3/99, 1/03, 5/14, 2/19

REVIEWED COMMITTEE: N/A

APPROVED BY:


 Kim McKenzie, RN, MSN, CPHQ
 Chief Executive Officer
 Interim Chief Nursing Officer


 Anish Mahajan, MD
 Chief Medical Officer

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3. Forward the Registration Screen Detailed Report via the EHR to print in Clinical Social Work, Bed Control, and the Information Desk.
 4. When notified that an Unidentified Patient's identity has become known, make the appropriate name change in the Electronic Health Record (EHR), in all of the patient's corresponding paperwork, and on the Harbor patient identification card and arm band.
 5. Forward another Registration Screen Detailed Report via the EHR to print in Clinical Social Work to indicate that the respective unidentified patient has been identified.
- 3. Telephone Operators, Patient Information and DEM**
1. Refer all calls inquiring about a possible Unidentified Patient or a "missing person" who may be in the Medical Center to Bed Control.
 2. Be sensitive to callers trying to locate someone who we may have listed as an Unidentified Patient (i.e., Is my father Tony Smith there? He has been missing for two days).
- 4. Bed Control**
1. Receive calls inquiring about a possible Unidentified Patient, refer to the Registration Detailed Statement printouts, and check listings of Unidentified Patients.
 2. If information received from the caller can be matched with the identification of an unidentified patient listed in our records, screen the call for further information to verify that the caller is the appropriate person to receive information regarding the patient (i.e., approximate age, ethnicity, color hair and eyes, approximate weight).
 3. If there is a similar match and the patient is identified, refer the caller to the Clinical Social Work Supervisor at (424) 306-4420, Monday through Friday during business hours. After-hours, weekends and holidays, refer the caller to the Nursing Supervisor at (424) 306-4273.
- 5. Inpatient Nursing Units**
1. When an unidentified patient arrives on the unit, verify that Clinical Social Work has been notified of the admission.
 2. When an unidentified patient's identity becomes known, notify the Business Office/Patient Resources Worker immediately.
- 6. Business Office/Patient Resources Worker**
1. When notified that an unidentified patient's identity has become known, make the appropriate name change in the EHR, in all of the patient's corresponding paperwork, and the Harbor patient Identification Card and armband.
- 7. Clinical Social Work**
1. When notified of an unidentified patient admission via an EHR printout, begin the identification process according to Clinical Social Work procedures.
 2. Report the admission to the Los Angeles Police Department, Missing Persons Division at (213) 996-1800, and the County Sheriff's Office at (424) 306-4450. The County Sheriff's Office is staffed Monday through Friday. Include a physical description of the patient and a description of the clothing the patient was wearing when s/he was found.
 3. Examine the paramedic's report to check for location where the patient was picked up, as well as any identifying information or telephone numbers of family or neighbors.

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4. If a patient is on a 72-hour hold, read the "5150 report" to see where the patient was found. Check the board and care and skilled nursing facilities in the area to see if they are missing a patient.
 5. Ensure the Patient Valuables Clerk in Registration has examined all clothing for name tags, phone numbers, old bills, etc. If an address is found on an old envelope or utility bill, etc., contact the utility company to see if bills are still going to that address. Have Public Health personnel of Adult Protective Services confirm the address.
 6. If a patient is found to be developmentally delayed, check with Regional Centers to determine whether the patient is their client.
 7. Ask the Sheriff's Department, at (424) 306-4450 to initiate a Blue Check (portable fingerprinting device that syncs to their computer databank). If the identity is determined and a Missing Person's report had been made, the Sheriff will file a Found Person's Report.
 8. When the name of the patient or an "Also Known As" (AKA) is known, and previous steps have not located the patient's origin, the social worker needs to go to Patient Registration and request a check in LEADERS and/or MEDS.
 9. Make a written referral to the Public Guardian for conservatorship. Place a copy in the patient's medical record, and maintain a copy in Clinical Social Work Department.
 10. The Clinical Social Work Supervisor will send an e-mail to the Directors of Health Information Management and Registration requesting a search for information on the unidentified patient. The e-mail is to include:
 - Name (or AKA's)
 - Approximate age
 - Sex
 - Race
 - Physical description
 - Area where patient was found
 - Any information that may help to identify the patient
 11. Upon receipt of a response from the County Sheriff on the results of the fingerprinting, the Clinical Social Worker assigned to the case will chart the results in the patient's medical record. If the identity is determined and a Missing Person's report had been made, the Sheriff will file a Found Person's Report.
 12. When the Clinical Social Work Department and the County Sheriff have exhausted all resources without successfully identifying the patient, the Clinical Social Work Director will send a written request for a press release to the administrative Public Information Officer. This request will be a comprehensive report of all the efforts made to identify the patient, and contain the following information, required by the Department of Health Services' Communications Office before a press release will be issued:
 - A description of the patient and all known identifying information
 - When, where and the circumstances under which the patient was found
 - Date of admission to the hospital
 - Documentation of names of agencies, dates they were contacted and the dates they responded
 - A photograph of the patient
 - Name and telephone number of Harbor's Public Information Officer
 13. The Clinical Social Work Supervisor will continue to follow and monitor the identification process and keep the County Sheriff informed. Documentation in the medical record is to continue according to Clinical Social Work procedures.
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14. Notify the appropriate areas when the patient is identified. If the patient is not identified, Clinical Social Work staff will continue placement efforts and coordination with the Office of Public Guardian.

8. County Sheriff

1. Upon receiving a request from Social Work to fingerprint a person who has been admitted as an unidentified patient, the County Sheriff or (law enforcement agency if the patient is involved in an active investigation) will:
 - a. Fingerprint the patient using the Blue Check device.
 - b. Document a description of the patient that will include:
 - Height and weight
 - Hair and eyes
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race
 - Distinguishing characteristics (i.e., scars, tattoos, missing limbs, etc.)
 - Location from which patient was transported to Harbor
2. Report findings to the party requesting fingerprints.
3. If there is a suspected crime or investigation, the law enforcement agency responsible would be responsible to identify.

Note: County Sheriff will run prints only if the patient is involved in an active investigation and only after it is determined the agency wants the finger prints completed.

9. Public Information Officer, Administration

1. The Administrative Public Information Officer will review the request for a press release to ensure all the required information is included. If a release is to be obtained, the Public Information Officer will send a written request to the Department of Health Services' Communications Office, including the information provided by the Clinical Social Worker staff as listed above.