



**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

**SUBJECT:** DISPOSITION OF PATIENTS WITHOUT MEDICAL INDICATION FOR  
INPATIENT HOSPITALIZATION

**POLICY NO:** 370.100

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**PURPOSE:**

To provide guidance to clinicians regarding appropriate disposition of patients being evaluated in outpatient settings who lack a medical indication for inpatient hospitalization.

**SCOPE:**

Patients often present to County outpatient facilities, particularly Emergency Departments (EDs), with difficult social and life circumstances. In these settings, physicians with admitting privileges may consider admitting such patients even when there is insufficient clinical indication for such admission. Doing so, however, exposes that patient to the risks/dangers of hospitalization, reduces the number of inpatient beds available to other County residents who do require inpatient admission, contributes to ED and urgent care overcrowding, and leads to unreimbursed County costs.

This policy applies to all outpatient settings (Emergency Departments, urgent cares, and clinics/physician offices). It also applies to patients being transferred from an inpatient unit at another DHS or non-DHS facility.

**POLICY:**

Bed-control units at individual facilities will not release a bed for a patient until it has both a) an admission order from an appropriate clinician, and b) written documentation that such an admission meets admission criteria based on either the application of InterQual (or another similar evidence-based utilization management decision support tool) or, in a minority of cases, the judgment of a qualified second-level reviewer. Those patients without an indication for inpatient admission should be either discharged, admitted to observation status (if appropriate), or remain at their current level of care until a more suitable placement is identified. Patients should be discharged with appropriate discharge instructions and with future follow-up, if clinically indicated.

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**APPROVED BY:**  
**REVIEW**  
**DATES:**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** December 1, 2012

**SUPERSEDES:**

# DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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On rare occasions, a patient's unique circumstances are such that an inpatient admission is the most appropriate and/or only feasible course of action despite having no medical justification for admission per InterQual (or other similar evidence-based criteria set) and second-level review. In these cases, bed control will release a bed only after obtaining approval from senior medical leadership. Individual facilities will determine the limited set of physicians who are eligible to make this determination. Facilities will track use of this mechanism separately than admissions approved through either InterQual or second-level review.

In documenting discharge rationale in accordance with this policy, physicians may note the following: "Patient does not meet criteria for inpatient admission according to InterQual and second-level physician review and is discharged according to DHS Policy 370.100, "Disposition of Patients without Medical Indication for Inpatient Hospitalization."

## **CROSS REFERENCES:**

DHS Policies:

- 370 Admission to Hospitals
- 376 Observation Services

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## **EFFECTIVE**

**DATE:** December 1, 2012

**SUPERSEDES:**

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