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**TO: ALS and BLS Providers  
Base Hospital ED Directors and PLNs  
Skilled Nursing Facilities**

**FROM: Humberto Ochoa, MD, EMS Agency Medical Director**

**RE: BLS Ambulance Usage Guidelines**

**DATE: January 21, 2009**

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It has become necessary to clarify when Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances can be utilized to transport patients from Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF). When a Riverside County Permitted BLS Provider is contacted to transport a patient, the dispatcher is required to make a quick determination if BLS transportation is appropriate. If a dispatcher determines that an Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulance is needed, 9-1-1 should be contacted immediately and the request should be documented. Once the dispatcher has determined ALS services are not needed, a BLS ambulance can be sent to the requested location. Once on scene, the crew should make a quick assessment of the patient's condition as soon as possible to determine if an ALS level of care is needed. If ALS services are required, 9-1-1 should be contacted immediately to minimize any delay in their arrival. Section 6000 (BLS Patient Care Policies) of Riverside County EMS Agency's Protocols, Policy and Procedure Manual should be referenced to make this decision. This manual can be purchased from the EMS Agency office or be viewed on line at [www.rivcoems.org](http://www.rivcoems.org). In addition, the following criteria should be used to determine when to contact 9-1-1:

1. Complaints of chest pain, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
2. Complaints of generalized weakness with a medical history of heart disease or diabetes.
3. Any complaints of severe pain or severe discomfort.
4. Patients with temperatures greater than 103° F.
5. Cyanosis – SaO<sub>2</sub> less than 90% or respiratory distress not relieved by oxygen administration (as determined by the appropriate staff at the sending facility).
6. Acute altered level of consciousness.
7. Abnormal blood sugar level.
8. Uncontrolled bleeding or any type of bleeding with unstable or abnormal vital signs.
9. Unstable vital signs.
10. Anytime a dispatcher or BLS ambulance crewmember has any doubt in the patient's condition or status (e.g. the staff at the SNF can not provide enough information to make a decision).
11. Any patient with a DNR that meets the above criteria.

Any questions on this matter should be referred to James Lee, EMS Specialist at (951) 358-5029.