

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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POLICY MEMO

TO: Providers of Developmental Disabilities Services

RE: Medical Care

FROM: Jeff Sturm

If you think there is an emergency situation first call 911, then notify your supervisor. When making a call to 911, be prepared to give the needed information. You will be asked the **nature** of the emergency (what type of emergency is it?), the **location** including street address and whether or not the person is inside or outside of the building. You will also need to provide a **telephone number**. A card listing these questions located next to the phone can be helpful during an emergency situation.

While awaiting response from an ambulance crew, those who have been trained to perform first aid can act within the bounds of the knowledge they have. Those who are not trained to perform first aid can also assist by remaining calm and staying with the injured person or helping to calm and care for other clients that are present.

Below is a list of some medical emergencies or warning signs of an impending emergency situation that should involve a call to 911. Lists can never cover every situation but this may familiarize you with some of the possible situations you may face which will require you to act.

1. Loss of consciousness
2. Acute chest pain
especially if accompanied by signs of sweating, nausea,
dizziness, and shortness of breath
3. Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or choking

4. Possible stroke. Signs include:
 - Sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
 - Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
 - Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
 - Sudden trouble walking, loss of balance or coordination
 - Sudden, severe headache with no known cause
5. Prolonged seizure.
 - A prolonged seizure lasts approximately 5 minutes longer than the person's normal state of seizure and might graduate to status epilepticus.
6. Acute abdomen: Severe persistent abdominal pain of sudden onset. This may be associated with nausea, vomiting, abdominal distention, fever and signs of shock.
7. Trauma: especially head injury associated with decreased responsiveness, possible spine injury, or severe bone fractures.
8. Sudden injury causing a serious burn or a deep or large wound
9. Continuous, severe bleeding
10. Coughing up or vomiting blood
11. Severe or persistent vomiting
12. Sudden change in mental status:
 - such as unusual behavior, confusion, difficulty arousing, unusual sleepiness especially if accompanied by headache, dizziness, fainting, slow or rapid breathing, rapid pulse or following a head injury.
 - Sudden confusion in a diabetic person is also an emergency.
13. Sudden, severe pain anywhere in the body.
14. Ingestion of a poisonous substance
15. Heat stroke: hot dry skin, usually red, mottled or cyanotic. Often accompanied by weakness, confusion, dizziness.

Again, a list cannot be comprehensive. Each situation needs to be assessed individually. If you think someone needs immediate assessment and possible transport to the emergency department, call 911.