

Subject: After Hours Access

Page 1 of 4

Objective:

To ensure that the medical needs of all Tuality Health Alliance (THA) members are provided after regular business hours, on weekends, and during vacation periods 24 hours 7 days a week. This includes Primary Care Physicians (PCP) and OB/GYN Physicians as an operative element of after-hours care.

Definitions:

“Emergency Medical Condition” means a medical condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity such that a prudent layperson could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in placing the health of the individual or with respect to a pregnant woman, the health of the woman or her unborn child, in serious jeopardy, serious impairment to bodily functions or serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part. It is based on presenting symptoms, not the final diagnosis and includes cases in which the absence of immediate medical attention would not in fact have had the adverse results.

“Urgent Care Services” are defined as covered services that are medically appropriate and immediately required in order to prevent a serious deterioration of a member’s health that results from an unforeseen illness or an injury.

Policy:

THA Physicians are required to arrange for on-call medical coverage after regular office hours, weekends and vacation periods.

- I. Physician Responsibilities:
 - A. Maintenance of a 24-hour telephone coverage either on site or through call sharing or an answering service for after office hours calls. This included the provision of interpreter services and hearing impaired services after office hours.
 1. All persons answering the telephone shall have sufficient communication skills and training to reassure members and encourage them to wait for a return call in appropriate situations.
 2. All persons answering the telephone shall be trained to communicate with hearing impaired members via Telecommunications Relay Services
 - B. Notify the answering service and TCH and TFGH Emergency Department of any after hours changes that occur in the on-call schedule (e.g. physician unavailable for several hours, another physician has arranged to take call for

that time period).

- C. Respond immediately to calls which are emergent.
 - D. Respond within 30 minutes to calls that are urgent.
 - E. If information is inadequate to determine if the call is urgent, the call shall be returned within 60 minutes
 - F. Appropriate documentation of after hours care provided communicated to the PCP in a clinical record.
- II. Limited License Independent Practitioners- After Hours Nurse Practitioners and/or Physician's Assistants provide after-hours care for the hospitalized THA patient under the following circumstances:
- A. Nurse Practitioners
 - 1. Level I Nurse Practitioners must have an arrangement with one or more cooperating physicians on the Medical Staff who have agreed to perform physician services, which are outside the scope of practice of the Nurse Practitioner.
 - 2. The cooperating physician will have responsibility for the patient's care and documentation of care for any activities, which are outside the delineated privileges of the Nurse Practitioner's license.
 - 3. The cooperating physician shall be promptly available for consultation or evaluation of the patient if there is any question about the patient's condition or care. This can be done by telephone or in person. The cooperating physician shall co-sign all orders within 24 hours.
 - B. Physician's Assistants
 - 1. Physicians' Assistants must have an arrangement with one or more cooperating physicians on the Medical Staff who have agreed to perform physician services, which are outside the scope of practice of the Physician Assistant.
 - 2. Physician's Assistants must remain under the direct supervision of specified members of the Medical Staff to ensure adequate overall patient protection. The cooperating physician has ultimate responsibility for the patient's general medical condition.
 - 3. At all times, the supervising physician will remain responsible for the Patient and acts of the Physician's Assistant, as only within the limits of their privileges within the hospital. The physician must be immediately available for back up of non-physician providers.
- III. Physician Office Responsibilities:
- A. Provide the answering service location information (i.e. home, pager,

business, cellular telephone numbers, etc.) for each office physician and any physician included within the “call” schedule.

- B. Review the information annually, or when any physician information changes, and submit changes to the answering service by the following business day.
- C. Provide the answering service with an up to date and complete after hours “call” schedule.
- D. Coordinate with the answering service that is to be notified when the on-call physician is not located.

IV. Answering Service Responsibilities:

When receiving after office hours phone calls from members, the answering service will follow the guideline outlined below:

- A. If patient phone calls are received and cannot wait until regular office hours to speak with the PCP; the on-call PCP shall respond immediately to calls which may be emergent in nature.
- B. Urgent calls shall be returned appropriate to the member’s condition, but in no event more than 30 minutes after receipt.
- C. If information is inadequate to determine if the call is urgent, the call shall be returned within 60 minutes.
- D. Calls that can wait until regular office hours will be relayed to the office at an agreed upon time.

V. Monitoring:

- A. THA staff conducts surveys to monitor after hours access, 24-hour telephone and on-call PCP coverage.
- B. THA may conduct either onsite and/or telephone monitoring of after hours access and on-call physician coverage.
- C. These findings are incorporated in the recredentialing process.
- D. When a quality concern is identified, the Quality Management Committee will be informed and may develop an action plan based on the THA Peer Review Policy.

Subject: After Hours Access

Page 4 of 4

VI. THA Staff Access

THA administrative staff is available to answer calls from members during normal office hours including lunch hours.

Reference: OAR 410-141-0140
OAR 410-141-0220
OAR 847-050-0040
OAR 441.064

Attachment: Medical Record Documentation Audit Tool

Formulated: October 1994
Reviewed: October 1995
Revised: December 1998
December 1999
October 2001
June 2003
July 2006
October 2009
December 2011

THA Plan Director Date

THA Medical Director Date