

## Interfacility Transfer Agreements and Guidelines

**Interfacility Transfer Agreements:** Written contracts between a referring facility and a receiving facility with the appropriate level of care and resources required for the patient. The agreements must formalize arrangements for consultation and transport of pediatric and adult patients to the receiving facility. An agreement that applies to all patients or patients of all ages would suffice, as long as it is not written only for adults.

**Interfacility Transfer Guidelines:** Hospital-to-hospital, including out-of-state, guidelines that outline procedural and administrative policies for transferring critically ill patients to facilities that provide specialized care or services not available at the referring facility. Interfacility guidelines include pediatric and adult patients. A guideline that applies to all patients or patients of all ages would suffice, as long as it is not written only for adults.

Interfacility transfer guidelines must include the following:

- Defined process for initiation of transfer, including the roles and responsibilities of the referring facility, such as requesting transfer and communication.
- Process for selecting the appropriate care facility.
- Process for selecting the appropriately staffed transport service to match the patient's acuity level (level of care required by patient, equipment needed in transport, etc.).
- Process for patient transfer, including obtaining informed consent.
- Plan for transfer of patient medical record.
- Plan for transfer of copy of signed transport consent.
- Plan for transfer of personal belongings of the patient.
- Plan for provision of directions and referral institution information to family.

All hospitals, regardless of level of care, should have interfacility transfer guidelines and agreements. These are necessary when transferring patients to receiving facilities. The receiving facilities may offer a different or higher level of care, such as specialty treatments for burns. The receiving facilities may also receive transfer patients during periods of surge, in the event of local or regional disaster, or for a mass-casualty. In the case of regional disasters, pediatric-specialty hospitals and tertiary-level hospitals should have interfacility transfer guidelines to manage transfers to other hospitals within and across state lines.

In addition, hospitals may have one document that comprises both the interfacility transfer agreement and guidelines. This is acceptable as long as the document includes all interfacility transfer agreement and guideline components. **Note:** Compliance with the Emergency Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) does not constitute having interfacility transfer guidelines.