

DATE:	MAY 27, 2022
NUMBER:	M.1
SUBJECT:	ACCESS TO CARE
RELATED SECTIONS:	ENTIRE M SECTION; Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003; NCCHC J-A-01

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for reasonably prompt access to medical services for any incarcerated person complaining of illness or injury.

POLICY

Any incarcerated person in the custody of the San Diego Sheriff shall have quality and timely access to care for their medical, dental and mental health needs. The Responsible Health Authority (RHA) shall identify and eliminate any unreasonable barriers, intentional or unintentional, to inmates receiving health care.

PROCEDURE:

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Access to care** - incarcerated persons are seen by a qualified healthcare provider, rendered a clinical judgement, and receive care that is ordered in a timely manner.
- B. **Responsible Health Authority (RHA)** - is a designated individual or entity that is tasked with ensuring the organization and delivery of all health care in the facility. This can be a physician, health services administrator or agency.
- C. **Health Care** - is the sum of all actions, preventative and therapeutic, taken for the physical and mental well-being of a population. Health care includes medical, dental, mental health, nutrition and other ancillary services.

II. HEALTH CARE –Incarcerated populations must have access to health care services free from unreasonable barriers that deter them from seeking care for their health needs.

- A. It is essential that they always have access to care either by:
 - 1. The on-duty nursing staff;
 - 2. A qualified healthcare provider (QHP) such as a physician, psychiatrist, registered nurse practitioner or physician assistant, who is physically present at the jail;
 - 3. A QHP on call and available within a reasonable time; or
 - 4. Transportation to the nearest hospital providing emergency department service.
- B. Incarcerated persons shall not be punished for seeking care.

- C. Incarcerated persons shall not be prevented from accessing necessary care due to lack of funding.
- D. Utilization review will be processed objectively using evidence-based criteria within a reasonable time frame.
- E. It is required that victims of sexual assault receive access to emergency medical and crisis intervention services as defined and mandated by the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003.
- F. It is required that victims of sexual assault receive access to ongoing medical and mental health care, and abusers (if known) receive access to care as well.
- G. Compliance with medical orders - it is essential there is careful compliance with the orders of doctors for patient care, medication, diet, hospitalization and/or the return of the incarcerated person for further treatment. Final decisions rest with the detention facility contracted medical services provider.