



**SIGNING AGAINST MEDICAL ADVICE (AMA) IN THE FIELD**

**I. STANDING ORDER: ADULT AMA**

1. A capable adult, legal guardian, or an emancipated minor may refuse specific EMS medical evaluation and care (example – establishment of an IV), all EMS medical care indicated, or transport to an emergency receiving facility.
2. When both EMS personnel and the patient or legal guardian/care giver agree that medical evaluation and/or transport is not necessary, refer to SO-REL.
3. If a patient or legal guardian decides to sign out or leave AMA when EMS medical care or transport is indicated:
  - a. Communicate the potential risks/consequences of refusal of care to the patient or legal guardian.
  - b. Present to the patient or legal guardian alternatives for obtaining care/transport or modification of services offered.
4. Contact the Base Hospital for patients signing out AMA that meet Base Hospital contact criteria (OCEMS Policy # 310.00). If the patient refuses treatment and/or transport and there is some question on the part of field personnel as to the decision making capacity of the patient, Base Hospital consultation should be obtained.
5. When a patient exhibits signs of being a danger to self or others, or is gravely disabled due to a mental condition and cannot simply be treated and/or transported, notify law enforcement and remain with the patient until law enforcement has made a determination regarding legal detention (5150).
6. It is not appropriate to dissuade or coerce a patient into signing AMA as a means to release in the field rather than transport for medical evaluation.

**II. STANDING ORDER: UNDER AGE OF CONSENT (LESS THAN 18 YEARS-OLD) AMA:**

1. Patients less than 18 years-old and not emancipated minors who are offered EMS transport from the field may decline that offer when ALL of the following criteria are met:
  - a. A paramedic primary and secondary exam along with vital signs confirm that no medical or psychiatric emergency exists for the minor and no EMT or paramedic treatment/intervention is indicated.
  - b. The minor's parent or legal guardian has been contacted or is present at the scene and does not request EMS services and/or declines EMS transport. If the parent or legal guardian is not available, a self-sufficient minor may still be released at scene after all appropriate attempts are made and documented to locate the parent or legal guardian (see SO-REL). A minor who is not self-sufficient may still be released if a responsible adult is present (see SO-REL).
  - c. The parent or legal guardian, if available, has been advised and communicates they understand that they may seek further assessment from a health care provider.
  - d. The scene and situation in which the minor is being left is not a threat to their health and personal safety.
2. If the parent or legal guardian is unavailable or cannot be contacted, a non-emancipated minor cannot sign out AMA and must be transported if an emergency medical or psychiatric condition may exist.
  - a. If the patient continues to refuse transport, request help from law enforcement. Should law enforcement decline to intervene, make base hospital contact.

Approved:

*Carl Schultz, MD*

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**ORANGE COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**  
**PREHOSPITAL STANDING ORDERS**

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**DOCUMENTATION:**

All AMA cases must have appropriate AMA documentation entered into the OC-MEDS ePCR with the patient's signature (when patient capable and agrees to sign).

**GUIDELINE EXPLANATIONS:**

**"Capable"** means an adult patient (or emancipated minor), who has the capacity to understand the circumstances surrounding his/her illness or impairment, and the risks associated with declining treatment or transport; and is alert, oriented and his/her judgment is not impaired.

**"Emancipated Minor"** includes any of the following

Active duty military

Married or previously married

≥ 14 years old living apart from parents and managing own finances, and declared an "Emancipated Minor" by a Superior Court

**"5150"** means a patient who is held against his/her will for evaluation under the authority of Welfare & Institutions Code 5150 because the patient is a danger to him/herself, a danger to others, and/or is gravely disabled, e.g., unable to care for self due to a mental condition. This written order may be placed by a law enforcement officer, County mental health worker, or an emergency physician certified by the County Mental Health Department to place an individual on a 5150 hold. (Pediatric equivalent is Welfare & Institutions Code 5585)

Approved:

*Carl Schultz MD*

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