

Emergency Department Director Responsibilities *Information Paper*

These guidelines are a statement of suggested responsibilities for the emergency department director, chairperson, or chief of service. This listing is intended as a menu from which to choose specific items relevant to a particular emergency department (ED) setting, i.e., urban, rural, teaching, or specialty hospital. As emergency medicine evolves, it is expected this list of suggested duties/responsibilities will change. These guidelines are suggestions only and are not mandated by legislative, judicial, or regulatory agencies.

One of the duties of a department director is to delegate certain of these tasks to physician members of the department and to oversee and encourage the growth of their administrative skills.

This document may be used to prepare a written position description and as a guide for recruitment for and clarifying the responsibilities of this position.

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

- To provide leadership and management for the emergency department.
- To work cooperatively and supportively with the members of the medical staff to provide emergency services for all patients who present to the emergency department.
- To work cooperatively and supportively with the heads of diagnostic and therapeutic departments to ensure availability, quality, and effective use of services, and with chiefs of services to ensure that house staff services are appropriate.
- To provide significant input into the preparation of a departmental budget.
- To monitor community needs and provide significant input into EMS system and disaster planning.

QUALIFICATIONS

Race, color, national origin, religion, age, or sex should not be a factor in recruitment for this position. The following skills and experience are appropriate for the director of an emergency department.

- A. Career emergency medicine physician with proven clinical and administrative skills.
- B. Board certified in emergency medicine.
- C. Demonstrated knowledge and ability in the financial, managerial, and marketing aspects of emergency medicine.
- D. Meets ACEP requirements for annual continuing medical education.

- E. Demonstrated ability to speak effectively on administrative and clinical matters related to emergency medicine. Appropriately focuses to the audience, whether administrators, medical staff members, EMS providers, or the lay public.

AUTHORITY

In fulfilling the purpose of his/her job, the director will employ a wide range of managerial processes and techniques, and in general has the latitude to choose methods that work best in that setting. However, the director is expected to understand the overall system of management and employ methods in the management of the department that are harmonious with the overall system.

The director's fulfillment of responsibilities depends in part upon support from, and support of, individuals and units not shown as being accountable to him/her on the hospital organization chart.

The director should have the full authority of a department head to manage and direct the activities assigned to the position, provided it is done in agreement with the objectives, policies, and standards of the hospital and within recognized ethical, moral, and legal guidelines.

The director's authority to act in all areas of his/her responsibility is derived from the hospital rules and regulations, administration, and Board of Trustees.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The director:

- is to provide leadership, planning, organization, staffing, coordination, and evaluation for emergency department activities.
- is responsible for all medical administration, personnel, and activities in the emergency department.
- has the responsibility for ensuring the ethical practice of emergency medicine within the department.
- directly supervises and has responsibility for emergency physicians in clinical and assigned administrative duties.
- acts as liaison with hospital administration and medical staff.
- as department head, should be a member of the hospital executive committee and represent the interests of emergency medicine.
- should be concerned with physician scheduling.

The department director should present a written annual report to the emergency committee, hospital administration, and executive committee, detailing departmental progress, problems, and solutions.

Certain other duties and functions are listed below for special emphasis:

A. Department Management

1. Promotes and participates in a collaborative, interdisciplinary ED leadership team.
2. Collaborates with nursing leadership and ED Leadership team to ensure that departmental performance meets or exceeds standards described in medical staff rules and regulations, the hospital bylaws, departmental policies, the JCAHO Manual of Accreditation, and in other appropriate local and national standards.

3. Works with ED leadership team to ensure that the department meets or exceeds its defined objectives for improvement, growth, and expansion of services.
4. Cooperates with hospital administration and nursing leadership to develop a team of personnel managers for the emergency department (clerical, nursing, and others), teaching them by precept and example to manage.
5. In conjunction with the ED leadership team, helps build enthusiasm, stability, teamwork, and competence among employees through supervision, individualized evaluation and counseling, training, and praise for a job well done.
6. Ensures departmental policies are known, understood, and implemented by the emergency physicians.
7. Monitors correctness and appropriateness of the emergency department records; implements corrective intervention as required in association with medical records and quality assurance mechanisms.
8. Participates in personnel, purchasing, and procedural changes in the emergency department, in cooperation with appropriate personnel and hospital managers.
9. Is available for counseling, advice, information, and general support to the physicians and other department members.
10. Together with nursing leadership, ensures adequacy of EMS communications and physician EMS command.
11. Maintains a department office and is accessible during usual business hours for routine department business.

B. Education

1. Requires participation and initiation of inservice continuing education of physicians, residents, and clerical personnel.
2. Encourages the involvement of all physician staff to participate in EMS/paramedic training and education.
3. Establishes and encourages participation in emergency medicine grand rounds for physicians.
4. Encourages the involvement in ongoing focused education courses by the emergency department staff, as appropriate to that facility.
5. Encourages an outreach program to the community and industry on topics of interest in the area of emergency medicine, and promotes the hospital's medical capabilities.

C. Liaison

The director shall ensure that the emergency department has effective communications with the following individuals and groups:

1. Patients and their families
2. Hospital administration
3. Nursing leadership and clerical supervisors.
4. Hospital department heads
5. Medical staff:
Liaison with the medical staff should include the following aspects:
 - a. physician interface
 - b. promotion of emergency services provided
 - c. review of complaints and amicable resolution
 - d. encouraging use of new services in the ED
 - e. openness to suggestions from medical staff
 - f. timeliness of medical staff response to consultation
6. Laboratory and radiology department for follow-up and evaluation of tests initiated in the ED
7. Industry
8. Civic groups

9. City/county government in cooperation with hospital administration
10. Paramedic and EMS system
11. Emergency medicine residency programs
12. Clergy
13. Community social services
14. Hospital patient representatives
15. Security department
16. Legal community
17. Law enforcement agencies
18. Poison control
19. Managed Care Organizations and other third party payers.

D. Public Relations

1. Identifies the unique and important role of emergency services in the health care of the community as it pertains to emergency services and programs
2. Works with the public relations department to provide an appropriate media spokesperson for emergency care related questions or events.
3. Is available to press, radio, TV, and industry, for clarification of events or to amplify items of interest to the community in relation to emergency medicine. The director may appoint an appropriate designee to fill this role.

E. Recruitment-Orientation

1. Establishes an active process for identifying and recruiting emergency physicians, physician assistants, nurse clinicians, and nurse practitioners.
2. Reviews and verifies credentials, training, and education of emergency physicians, and mid-level staff in cooperation with the appropriate organizational credentialing office.
3. Designs a formal orientation process for new department members.
4. Conducts a final interview for emergency physicians leaving the department.

F. Department Meetings

1. Schedules regular departmental meetings and decides on the final agenda and special guests.
2. Encourages open forums for departmental communications and problem solving by all ED personnel.

G. Committees - Hospital/Department

1. Serves on hospital medical staff executive committee.
2. Assures emergency department representation on all appropriate committees.
3. Ideally, chairs Disaster Committee and Emergency Services Committee.
4. Encourages participation of emergency physicians on hospital medical staff committees:
 - a. Critical Care
 - b. Continuing Medical Education
 - c. Disaster
 - d. Medical Audit/Utilization Review
 - e. Quality Assurance
 - f. Medical Records
 - g. Others as pertinent (trauma, ethics, pharmacy, credentials, etc.)
5. Creates subcommittees among the emergency physician staff to undertake and report on specific areas requiring departmental attention and subsequent action. Creates task forces with appropriate membership to take action in specific areas requiring departmental attention.

H. Quality Assurance

1. In collaboration with the hospital quality assurance and risk management department, establishes, implements, and maintains the ED Quality Assurance/Risk Management program.
2. Identifies departmental recruitment problems and develops appropriate remedial policies and procedures.
3. Provides written documentation of problems reviewed and subsequent action taken for inclusion in the annual emergency department report.
4. Assists ED Leadership Team to prepare the department for site visits and surveys by appropriate licensing/accrediting agencies.
5. Collaborates with the ED Leadership Team to ensure rules governing the function of the ED are followed: e.g., JCAHO standards, state department of health regulations, medical staff bylaws, ED policies and procedures, fire codes, pharmacy board regulations, and insurance company rules.
6. Monitors and reviews standing orders in the ED.
7. Ensures that a system for providing patient discharge instructions is implemented and maintained.
8. Follows the hospital specific reporting structure for all QA activities.

I. Peer Reviews

1. Establishes an effective system for ongoing monitoring of physician/physician extender performance and remedial action for problem areas.
2. Completes various written reports as required from time to time by the hospital, including initial, final, and yearly evaluations of all emergency physicians.
3. Collaborates with the appropriate agencies to ensure emergency physician compliance with licensure and continuing medical education credit requirements.
4. Evaluates emergency physician competence in procedures for which they have privileges.
5. Provides timely audit of charts for completeness and content.
6. Reviews any adverse case outcomes or malpractice claims.
7. Interacts with ED nursing and clerical staff in areas of patient care and education.
8. Collaborates with appropriate agencies to ensure intervention and referral of cases such as sexual assault, child or elder abuse, and psychiatric crises.
9. Collaborates with appropriate staff to ensure public health department case reporting.
10. Advocates due process for complaint resolution and other issues relating to the ED medical staff.

J. Planning

1. Participates in long-range planning for facility design or modification, equipment acquisition, and new services.
2. Proactively addresses issues which may impair access to emergency care, i.e. decreased EMS funding, third party payor requirements for prior approval of emergency care, etc. (See ACEP policy Emergency Physician Stewardship of Finite Resources, Access to Emergency Care: Emergency Physicians & Uncompensated Care.)
3. Monitors advances in emergency care and initiates change as needed to ensure that ED services and capabilities are dynamic and progressive.
4. Employs prudent stewardship@ when planning changes in the delivery of emergency services. (See ACEP policy Emergency Physician Stewardship of Finite Resources)
5. Works with the ED Leadership Team including emergency nursing leadership and others as indicated to plan for and manage the change process.

K. Legal Considerations

1. Acts as an interface between hospital legal representative and risk management personnel concerning emergency department legal issues.
2. Educates the emergency physicians in proper documentation of charts and proper patient-physician interface:
 - a. document patient's complaint or lack of complaint
 - b. document all findings - positive and pertinent negative
 - c. document recommendations in chart and written instructions sent home with patient.
3. Acquires an understanding of the laws pertaining to emergency medicine.
4. Cooperates with the hospital management and nursing leadership to ensure departmental policies and procedures exist for dealing with legal issues in clinical care, e.g., crime, STD, coroner's cases, alcohol and substance abuse, minors, and child abuse.

L. Contracts and Finances

The director shall encourage development of mutually satisfactory contractual arrangements and terms between the hospital and the emergency physicians. These terms should include but are not limited to departmental status, responsibility of emergency physicians, termination clause, medical liability insurance, dispute resolution clause, compensation and benefit package. The director shall work with the appropriate billing services to maximize emergency physician and hospital reimbursement in a broad range of practice and reimbursement configurations:

1. Reimbursement:
 - a. fee-for-service
 - b. hourly rate
 - c. administrative stipend for chief
 - d. combination arrangement with bonuses
 - e. benefit package
2. Billing:
 - a. by group
 - b. by hospital
 - c. by agency
3. Emergency Physicians:
 - a. hospital employee
 - b. group employee
 - c. subcontractor
4. Contract with hospital:
 - a. departmental status
 - b. fee arrangement
 - c. responsibility of hospital
 - d. responsibility of physicians
 - e. termination clause
 - f. liability insurance issue
 - g. dispute resolution clause
 - h. common set of rules agreed to by physicians, hospital, medical staff.

*Developed by members of the Subcommittee on Emergency Department Director Responsibilities
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