

**I. General Considerations**

- A. When an EMS agency is responding, it should generally not cancel or discontinue the response prior to reaching the scene and assessing all potential patients. Non-transport encounters are some of the most concerning as they do not default to transport and subsequent hospital assessment.
  - B. Assessment, treatment and ambulance transport should routinely be offered to all patients irrespective of how minor the illness or injury may appear.
  - C. Competent, informed patients have the right to refuse treatment and transportation. This can only occur after a complete assessment has been performed. Studies have shown that a significant number of patients who refuse EMS treatment and transport will later seek medical assistance and require admission to a hospital. Some will even die.
  - D. Document the EMS response, assessment and actions taken in all cases.
  - E. After completing the Supplemental Report for Patient Non-Transport, leave a copy with the patient or, if appropriate, the patient's parent or guardian.
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**II. Procedure**

- A. Obtain an appropriate assessment of all patients based upon the nature of their illness or injury.
- B. Offer all patients treatment and transport. Initiate treatment according to the appropriate protocol(s).
- C. If the patient refuses offers of treatment and transport:
  - 1. Attempt to verify the competency of the patient to refuse treatment. If the patient is less than 18 years old or potentially incompetent (e.g., under the influence of drugs or alcohol, suicidal, head injury, etc.), *seek medical direction and police assistance as needed.*
  - 2. Explain, in the simplest possible language, the potential for harm created by the refusal. *Seek medical direction advice as needed.*
  - 3. Attempt to have the patient demonstrate understanding of your explanation by describing the potential for harm in his or her own words.
  - 4. If possible, have the refusal of treatment and/or transport witnessed by a third party, preferably not an EMS provider. Have the patient and witness sign a refusal form if possible.
  - 5. Report the circumstances of the refusal of treatment and/or transportation to medical direction. Seek further advice or guidance as needed.
  - 6. Advise the patient to seek medical attention if symptoms develop or worsen. Whenever possible, leave the patient in the care of another competent person.
  - 7. Document the circumstances of the response and the refusal using a standard run report form and the Vermont EMS Non-transport form. Any check mark in a shaded area requires on-line medical direction prior to terminating the patient encounter.