



## ALERT REGARDING DELAYED EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

The Division of Licensing has received more frequent reports regarding consumers who develop a critical medical or mental health condition but do not receive emergency medical care in a timely manner. Because a delay in obtaining emergency medical care may be a factor or the cause of a consumer's permanent injury or even death, this is a very serious concern. Staff persons, who have the capacity to recognize these critical medical or mental health conditions and have the authority to respond promptly, fill an important role in protecting the health of consumers. Sometimes however, staff persons fail to obtain emergency medical care for the following reasons:

- *The seriousness of the consumer's condition is not recognized.* A consumer's symptoms may be inaccurately attributed to a less serious condition (such as the "flu") or an injury is inaccurately judged to be minor.
- *Communication regarding the consumer's condition is incomplete.* When consultation is obtained, the situation is not accurately and thoroughly presented.
- *A consumer's reluctance to obtain care is too readily accepted.* A consumer may not understand or recognize the seriousness of his/her condition and a more assertive approach could be necessary.
- *Staff persons believe a change in the consumer's condition is behavioral.* Changes in behavior are sometimes caused by physical conditions that the consumer cannot clearly communicate to staff persons.
- *The consumer's baseline condition is not known and documented.* To assess any changes in a consumer's condition, knowledge of his/her baseline condition provides important context.
- *A staff person is reluctant to call others at inconvenient times.* Critical conditions often develop at inconvenient times and staff persons must not wait for a more opportune time to contact others.
- *Fear, panic, or denial inhibits an appropriate response to emergencies.* Encountering an emergency situation can be very stressful which contributes to a staff person's fear, panic, or denial that needs to be overcome through frequent and effective training.
- *Transportation in a staff or facility vehicle delays emergency medical care.* The equipment and resources that are available in an emergency vehicle allow treatment to begin promptly and continue without delay at a medical facility.
- *It is assumed that supervisory permission is needed before calling 9-1-1.* Staff persons should know that they have ongoing permission to call 9-1-1.

Providers should consult with a health care professional to develop and implement written procedures and conduct recurring training to provide clear direction and skill development for staff persons to identify and then respond to emergency situations. In addition, providers should authorize staff persons to call 9-1-1 without approval from a supervisor whenever they believe a serious medical concern exists.

The Licensing Division's investigation of an incident where emergency medical care was delayed can result in a finding of maltreatment against one or more individuals and/or a facility. Assuring prompt emergency medical care will help avoid these negative findings and, more importantly, provide greater safety for consumers. The medical care that can be obtained by calling 9-1-1 is a valuable resource.

Additional guidance and information is available from the Minnesota Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities at their website:

[http://www.ombudmhdd.state.mn.us/alerts/tx\\_del00.htm](http://www.ombudmhdd.state.mn.us/alerts/tx_del00.htm)