

ECU Physicians Group Practice Policy and Procedure Manual

Topic: ECU Physicians Answering Service Procedures - #A34	
Section No. 1	Section Name: Administrative and Clinical Operations
Approval Date: 2/23/06	Interim Medical Director Approval: Todd M. Beste, MD

I. Purpose:

This policy provides operating procedures for the management and conduct of the physicians' answering service to ensure that patient phone calls, received after-hours, are properly managed and responded to in a professional, efficient, and timely manner.

II. Definitions:

Provider On Call: Residents, Fellows, Attending Physicians, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, and Nurse Midwives who are assigned to after-hours on-call duty.

III. Policy:

The physicians' answering service provides patients, physicians, and medical staff after-hours access to the ECU Physicians provider on-call network.

The Contact Center is the principal agency responsible for the operation of the physicians' answering service.

The Contact Center Manager and Supervisor are responsible for coordinating with clinical departments on all matters pertaining to the operational conduct of the answering service.

IV. Procedure:

A. Emergency calls to 911:

For calls requiring a direct connection to 911, the answering agent will determine the city and county from which the caller is calling and then connect the caller with the appropriate area 911 dispatch.

B. Answering Service Procedures:

1. Calls received during regular business hours will be directed to the requested provider's daytime work location.
2. Calls received after regular business hours, on weekends and holidays will be directed to the provider on-call for the medical specialty that is requested by the caller.

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3. Each provider on-call will be contacted in the priority order contained in the on-call schedule and via the communication means specified in the provider's call account, (e.g., pager, home phone, cell phone, etc.)
4. The answering service will collect and communicate the following information to the provider on-call:
 - Caller's name
 - Caller's telephone number
 - A brief message regarding the medical situation
5. Once the provider on-call has responded to the answering service, he/she will be connected directly with the patient caller.
(Callers will be given the option of either remaining on-hold, while the agent contacts the provider on-call, or receiving a return call from the agent once the provider on-call is ready to be connected.)
6. If the (1st call) provider on-call does not respond to the answering service, the agent will implement procedures to contact that provider via alternate means, i.e., cell phone, home phone, or specified instruction that is contained in the provider's call account.
7. If the (1st call) provider on-call does not respond to the answering service after alternate means of contact has been used, the agent will contact the next provider, in order of precedence, in the on-call schedule.

C. Medical referral calls:

Medical referral calls, received after hours, regarding the transfer of patients to Pitt County Memorial Hospital (PCMH) will be connected to Refer Direct at PCMH.

D. Clinical Trials Subject Calls:

Clinical Trials subjects who call after hours will be connected with either the designated study coordinator or provider on-call.

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- E. Spanish Speaking Callers:
Calls received after hours from Spanish speaking callers will be transferred to an interpreter at the Language Services Line.
- F. On-Call Schedule and Call Account Information Procedures:
1. Each medical department will designate a representative to develop and maintain its provider on-call schedules in the Contact Center's Physician Web On-Call Scheduler application.
 2. The Contact Center will provide designated departmental representatives with access to and training on the use of the Physician Web On-Call Scheduler application.
 3. Provider on-call schedules will, as a minimum, contain 10 days of on-call schedule information; however, 30 days of on-call schedule information is preferred.
 4. If a change to an on-call schedule occurs after business hours, the physicians' answering service must be notified in order to implement the change to the on-call schedule. Prior to making an on-call schedule change, the answering service will confirm that change with the provider who is being activated on-call.
 5. If a department changes the assignment of its on-call scheduler representative, the Contact Center must be notified in order to discontinue that representative's access to Physician Web On-Call Scheduler and establish access and training for the newly designated representative.
 6. Each clinical department will ensure that providers on-call establish and maintain a call account in the Contact Center. To do this, each provider on-call must complete and submit a Physician Information Form to the Contact Center prior to his or her first assignment to after-hours on-call duty. (A copy of this form is attached to this policy.)

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- G. Operational Reporting Procedures:
1. The Contact Center is responsible for providing each medical department with the following operational reports:
 - a. Call Activity Volume
 - b. Answering Service Utilization Rates
 - c. Provider On-Call Incident Report

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