

## **Patient Signature Requirement**

Supersedes:

Effective: 05-01-10

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the CY 2009 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Final Rule, which requires ambulance service providers to obtain patient signatures as a condition for Medicare reimbursement. The patient signature also (1) authorizes the release of information to ambulance services and Medicare/insurance companies; (2) acknowledges the patient's financial responsibility for the ambulance transport; (3) provides a mechanism to appeal a claim that has been denied; (4) verifies that the ambulance services were actually provided as claimed; and (5) authorizes payment to the ambulance service provider.

Obtaining patient signatures at the time of transport will help Boston EMS ensure its revenue stream and will also help to alleviate patient stress. When signatures are obtained upfront, the patient will not have to revisit the trauma or medical event that precipitated the ambulance transport and his/her ambulance claim can be paid in a timely manner thereby eliminating unnecessary billing inquiries.

### PROCEDURE

1. Whenever possible, Boston EMS personnel should make reasonable efforts to obtain an electronic patient signature in SafetyPAD from every mentally and physically capable patient (age 18 or older) at the time of transport. If the patient is a minor, the patient's parent or legal guardian should sign on behalf of the patient. *See Screens #1 and #3 below.*
  - 1.1 SafetyPAD contains an electronic "Patient/Guardian Signature Form" which explains to the patient that he/she is financially responsible for the services provided by Boston EMS, regardless of insurance coverage. The form also explains that the patient assigns all rights of benefits to Boston EMS for compensation of the services provided. *See Screen #2 below.*
  - 1.2 The patient should not be asked to sign if he/she is mentally or physically incapable of signing his/her name. Examples of this include: a patient who is mentally incapacitated, a patient under the influence of drugs or alcohol, a patient who is restrained and unable to sign, a patient in great pain, or critically ill or injured patient. If a patient signature is obtained, the crew need not obtain any other signatures.
2. If a patient is physically and mentally capable of signing at the time of transport, but refuses to sign the "Patient/Guardian Signature Form", the ambulance crew should document the patient's refusal to sign. *See Screen #1. The crew need not obtain any other signatures and should not sign on the patient's behalf. Boston EMS is permitted to bill the patient directly if he/she refuses to sign the form.*

3. If the patient is physically or mentally incapable of signing at the time of service, the ambulance crew must properly document the patient's incapacity as shown in the drop down of *Screen #4* as well as in the narrative. The crew then must make reasonable efforts at the time of service to obtain a signature from an authorized signer on the patient's behalf. Authorized signers include:
  - The patient's legal guardian, if the patient is NOT a minor;
  - The patient's Healthcare Power of Attorney (Healthcare POA);
  - A relative or other person who receives government benefits on behalf of the patient;
  - A relative or other person who arranges treatment or handles the patient's affairs; or
  - A representative of an agency or institution that furnished care, services, or assistance to the patient (i.e. a police officer, a representative of a managed care facility, etc.)

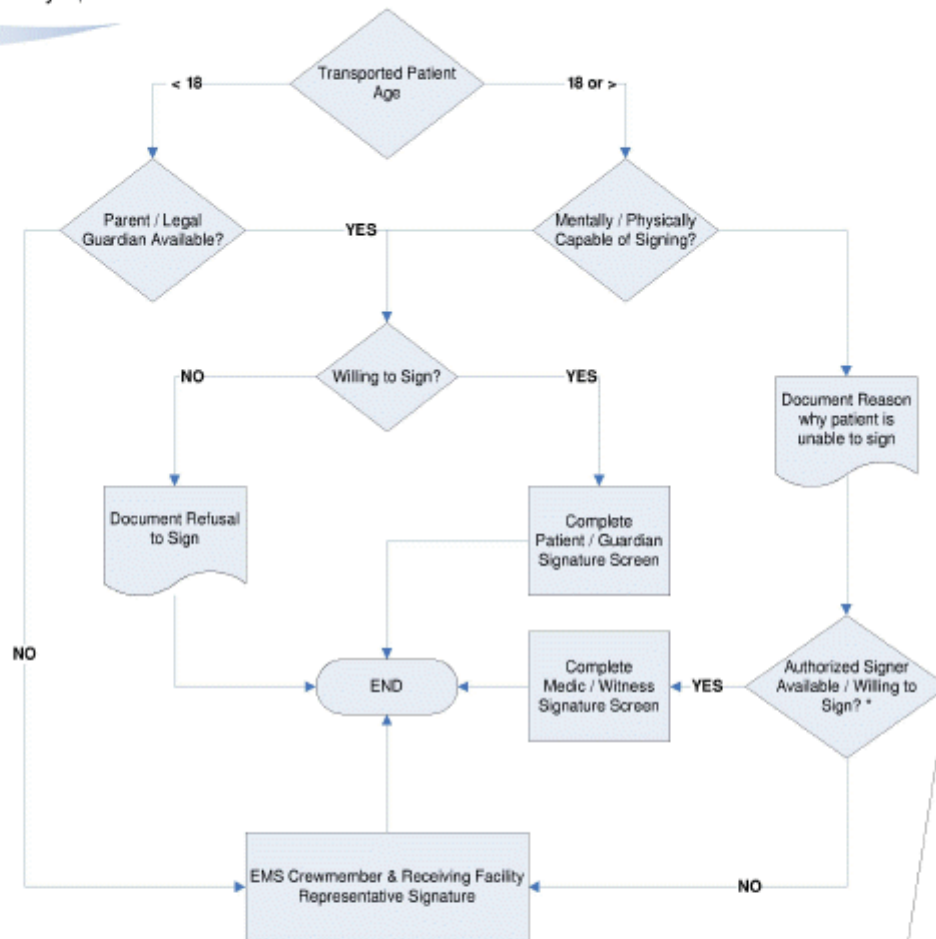
The crew must document the authorized signer's type (i.e. Healthcare POA, wife, husband, police officer, etc.) as shown in *Screen #5* and then capture his/her signature as shown in *Screen #6*. Once the signature of an authorized signer is obtained, the crew need not capture any other signatures

4. If the crew cannot obtain the signature of the patient because the patient is physically or mentally incapable of signing AND the crew cannot obtain the signature of an authorized signer at the time of service, a member of the transporting crew along with a representative of the receiving facility may sign contemporaneously on the patient's behalf.

4.1 The crew member will select his/her name and rank from the dropdown as shown in *Screen #7*. The "EMS Crew Signature" notice will appear prompting the crew member to sign and to obtain the signature of a representative from the receiving facility. *See Screen #8*. As shown in *Screen #9*, the crew member will be prompted to sign.

4.2 The crew must also obtain the signature of a representative of the receiving facility. The representative may be a clerk or other administrative personnel, a nurse, a doctor, etc. The crew member must select the type of representative as shown in *Screen #10*. SafetyPAD contains an electronic "Receiving Facility Representative" notice (*See Screen #11*) which explains to the signing representative of the receiving facility that his/her signature does not obligate any responsibility for payment either personally or to the hospital, but is merely a confirmation of transport which will allow Boston EMS to submit for reimbursement. The representative of the receiving facility will be prompted to sign as shown in *Screen #12*.

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May 1, 2010



- \* Authorized Signers:
- Patient's Legal Guardian
  - Patient's Healthcare Power of Attorney
  - A relative or other person that receives benefits on behalf of patient
  - A relative or other person who arranges treatment or handles patient's affairs
  - A representative of an agency or institution that furnishes care, services, or assistance to the patient (police officer, representative of a managed care facility, etc.)