



# CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

<b>VOLUME 1: GOVERNANCE &amp; ADMINISTRATION</b>	Effective Date: 9/01/11
<b>CHAPTER 12: HEALTH CARE INQUIRIES AND APPEALS</b>	Revision Date(s):
<b>POLICY 1.12.2: CONSOLIDATED CONTROLLED CORRESPONDENCE AND PATIENT-INMATE HEALTH CARE INQUIRY LINE RESPONSE POLICY</b>	Attachments: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## I. POLICY

The California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS), Controlled Correspondence Unit (CCU), shall provide timely and appropriate responses to patient-inmate health care inquiries received by CCHCS or California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Inquiries may be through written correspondence or verbal messages left on the Inmate Health Care Inquiry Line (Hotline). Written correspondence may be received from one or more of the following sources: patient-inmate; patient-inmate family member or friend; advocate or advocacy group and/or legal representative; Governor’s Office, Legislature, and Federal or State Courts; CDCR Office of the Secretary; other State agencies (e.g., Medical Board of California); and/or the CCHCS Office of Third Level Appeals – Health Care (OTLA-HC). Hotline messages may be received from one or more of the following sources: patient-inmate family member or friend; advocate or advocacy group, and/or legal representative.

The CCU abides by all applicable state and federal laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which prohibits sharing health care information with anyone not authorized to receive such information.

## II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that timely and appropriate responses are provided to patient-inmate health care inquiries while abiding by all state and federal laws.

## III. RESPONSIBILITY

The Director, Policy and Risk Management Services, shall ensure compliance with this policy.

## IV. PROCESS OVERVIEW

Upon receipt of written correspondence or Hotline message, CCU staff shall document and assign each correspondence/Hotline message. The correspondence or Hotline message shall be triaged for urgent/emergent issues and such issues shall be reported to CCHCS headquarters staff for action, as necessary. The CCU staff shall research patient-inmate health care concerns and shall document the information obtained in the CCU database. The CCU staff shall provide a response to the correspondent or Hotline caller.

## V. PROCEDURE

### A. Time Frames for Response

The following response time frames shall apply:

1. CDCR referrals (e.g., Governor’s Office correspondence, high priority response) – 10 business days

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2. CDCR referrals (routine response) – 25 business days
3. OTLA-HC referrals – 30 business days
4. Routine correspondence – 45 business days
5. Hotline calls – acknowledge one business day after receipt; research and respond within five business days

## **B. Urgent or Emergent Issues**

Written correspondence concerning patient-inmate health care issues shall be forwarded to a CCU Registered Nurse (RN), who shall immediately review the correspondence and determine whether the case is routine or requires urgent/emergent intervention. Urgent/emergent complaints include, but are not limited to: chest pain, seizures, asthma, not receiving life-sustaining medication, or symptoms of severe or unexplained pain, fever, bleeding, and/or extreme weight loss.

The patient-inmate's health care issue(s) are deemed urgent/emergent or requiring follow-up based on the CCU RN's review. If the issue cannot be immediately resolved by the CCU RN, it shall be referred to the appropriate CCHCS Clinical Executive or their designee for review and action.

## **C. Hotline Calls**

After following established procedures pertaining to researching and obtaining health care information, including determination of authorization for release of medical information, CCU staff shall return the Hotline call and provide information in accordance with all applicable laws.

## **D. Routine Correspondence**

When responding to routine written correspondence, CCU staff shall follow established procedures pertaining to researching and obtaining health care information, including determination of authorization for release of medical information, and preparing a response to the correspondent in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws.

## **VI. REFERENCES**

- Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 164.508 et seq., Uses and Disclosures for which an Authorization is Required
- California Civil Code, Section 56 et seq., Confidentiality of Medical Information Act
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- Inmate Medical Services Policies and Procedures, Volume 6, Chapter 50A, Release of Health Information: Family or Friend Access