SAN MATEO COUNTY HEALTH
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

EMS POLICY	515
Effective:	**July 2026**
Approval: EMS Director **Travis Kusman, MPH**	Signed:
Approval: EMS Medical Director **Greg Gilbert, MD**	Signed:

REPORTING OF SUSPECTED ABUSE/ BATTERY

I. PURPOSE

Healthcare providers are mandated reporters. Regardless of whether another mandated reporter agrees to file a report or if law enforcement is on-scene, it is the responsibility of each suspecting or witnessing healthcare provider to report child, dependent adult, and elder abuse and/ or neglect.

II. AUTHORITY

California Welfare and Institutions Code §15630, 15633, 15634, and 15658

III. DEFINITIONS

Abuse: Evidence of physical or emotional harm or neglect, which may be defined as intimidation, cruel punishment, fiduciary (financial) abuse, abandonment, isolation, or treatment resulting in physical harm or pain or mental suffering or the deprivation by a care custodian of goods and services which are necessary to avoid physical harm or mental suffering.

Child: Any person under the age of 18 years.

Dependent adult: Any person between the ages of 18 and 64 years who has physical or mental limitations which restrict their ability to carry out normal activities or to protect their rights including, but not limited, to persons who have physical or developmental disabilities or those whose physical or mental abilities have diminished due to age.

Elder: Any person of the age 65 years or older.

Reasonable suspicion: Information known to EMS personnel which, based on their training and experience, would lead another EMS provider in the same situation to suspect that the injury or condition of the patient was the result of a violent act or neglect.

IV. MANDATORY REPORTING

If EMS personnel reasonably suspect child, elder, or dependent abuse or neglect:

A. Immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency if it is suspected that abuse or neglect has occurred, whether the person that is suspected to have been abused or neglected is a patient.

B. If the person who is reasonably suspected to have been abused or neglected is a patient and is suffering from a medical emergency, make reasonable efforts to transport the patient to a receiving hospital for evaluation. Provide the receiving hospital staff with the basis for the abuse/ neglect suspicions.

C. Document observations and findings of suspected abuse or neglect, in addition to the other required information concerning the patient's medical complaint, in the electronic health record.

D. Contact the appropriate reporting agency by telephone immediately, or as soon as practically possible but not more than 12 hours, to provide a verbal report.
   1. San Mateo County Children and Family Services (650) 802-7922
   2. San Mateo County Aging and Disability Services (844) 868-0938

E. File a written report on the California Child Abuse Report form or the California Suspected Elder/ Dependent Abuse Report form with the appropriate reporting agency within forty-eight (48) hours.
   1. Child Abuse Report Form (click here) – form must be submitted via fax to San Mateo County Children and Family Services at (650) 592-2289. The address for Children and Family Services, a field that must be completed on the reporting form, is 1 Davis Drive, Belmont, CA 94002.
   2. Elder/ Dependent Adult Abuse Report Form (click here) – form is electronically submitted via DocuSign directly to San Mateo County Aging and Disability Services. A printed copy is not required to be sent via fax or mail.

F. Reporting under this policy is an individual requirement. Reporting is required even if law enforcement is at scene, or if there are other mandated reporter(s) at scene who also reasonably suspect abuse or neglect and whether the other mandated reporter(s) indicate they will file the report. Supervisors or managers shall not prevent or otherwise instruct a subordinate not to file a report required by this policy.

G. Reporting suspected abuse or neglect to the receiving hospital does not relieve a prehospital care provider of their obligation to report suspected abuse or neglect to the reporting agencies by telephone and in writing.

H. EMS personnel are not required to prove, or have substantial evidence of, abuse or neglect before making a report of suspected abuse or neglect pursuant to this policy. If a reasonable person under the circumstances would suspect the possibility of elder, dependent adult or child abuse or neglect, then the prehospital care provider is mandated to make a report pursuant to this policy.

I. In cases of suspected domestic violence, EMS personnel should:
   1. Make every attempt to transport the patient to the hospital.
   2. If the patient refuses transport, report the situation to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
   3. Document your findings in the electronic health record.

4. Notify the receiving hospital of your suspicions on arrival to the hospital.
5. If there is physical or environmental evidence of abuse, the appropriate law enforcement agency should be contacted as soon as reasonably possible. Notify the law enforcement agency of the intended receiving hospital.