

**OKALOOSA COUNTY  
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Responses Involving Emotionally Disturbed Patients</b>
<b>Policy:</b>	<b>305.00</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To safeguard both patients and EMS personnel against bodily harm during a response involving an emotionally disturbed patient.</b>

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**Policy:**

At all times, when present, law enforcement is responsible for, and in control of, any emergency call involving an emotionally disturbed patient.

Upon notification of the initial dispatch information, if it is reported that the patient is suicidal, violent and/or threatening other individuals, the dispatch center will dispatch a unit "Echo" response. The responding unit will **stage** with fire department personnel until law enforcement arrives and secures the scene.

If a patient is willing to be transported to a hospital and, in the crew's judgment, the patient can be removed without restraint or assistance, the crew may transport the patient to the hospital (if there is a medical necessity for transport by ambulance) without waiting for law enforcement. If there is no medical necessity for transport, law enforcement will transport the patient.

If a patient does not desire transportation to a hospital, is alert, oriented and able to understand his/her condition; treatment may be refused. If there is a question on the patient's ability to make sound decisions, medical control and/or law enforcement should be contacted to assist in Baker Act enforcement.

If a patient is found to be emotionally disturbed and is capable of violent action, EMS personnel shall await the arrival of law enforcement before attempting to treat the patient. EMS personnel shall not knowingly approach or remove a violent, emotionally disturbed patient without law enforcement present to accompany the patient.

If law enforcement at the scene finds it necessary to utilize restraining equipment, such as handcuffs, and the patient still needs transport by ambulance, every attempt should be made to restrain and position the patient in such a way that will facilitate CPR, should it become necessary. At least one law enforcement officer, if available, should ride in the patient compartment when handcuffs are used to restrain a patient or follow directly behind the ambulance to the ER. All emotionally disturbed patients shall be transported to the closest receiving hospital.

Where an emotionally disturbed patient is to be transported in custody from a law enforcement station or facility and no law enforcement officers are immediately available to accompany the patient, the crew shall contact the Shift Commander for assistance after evaluating the patient.

**Accountability and Compliance:**

1. It is the responsibility of all OCEMS employees to exercise caution when responding to a psychiatric/behavioral emergency. In addition, all OCEMS personnel will cooperate with law enforcement officers when dealing with such patients.

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