



## PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER'S DIRECTIVE

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### **PATIENT CARE RECORD FORM GUIDELINES (Revised)**

#### **GENERAL**

St. John Ambulance is often the first link in a chain of health care professionals that will treat an ill or injured person. The continuity of appropriate care for each patient may be determined by the documentation provided on the Patient Care Record (PCR) form. It is essential that this documentation is accurate and concise.

#### **THE PATIENT CARE RECORD (PCR) FORM**

The primary goals of the Patient Care Record (PCR) are:

- a) to document the patient's condition and treatments and/or actions taken by the patient care provider; and
- b) to document information as a means of communication to other health care providers and, therefore, to provide the best possible care for the patient. The PCR is also a legal document.

The Patient Care Record form (Annex A) reflects the minimum standard of information required. It has been reviewed by National and Provincial St. John Ambulance medical and nursing professionals, as well as legal counsel to ensure the best possible protection for the patient, the St. John Ambulance member, and the St. John Ambulance Organization. The Patient Care Record form must be completed in triplicate.

#### **HANDLING THE PATIENT CARE RECORD FORM**

Adhering to the following guidelines will help ensure accurate patient documentation:

- a) complete thorough documentation during and immediately following the intervention;
- b) be concise and specific, using lay terms and avoiding short forms;
- c) indicate clearly on the form if informed consent was obtained (see StJCI 2-7-2, paragraphs 14 to 16 for details on consent);
- d) record to whom responsibility of care is turned over, including the time and the patient's status at that time;

- e) all patients must be advised to seek further treatment from a physician, either immediately or at some time in the future.

All PCRs must be treated as confidential documents. The information provided by the patient is in confidence, and is not for divulgence to anyone except those responsible for providing care to the patient.

In instances of patient care not requiring a delegating Medical Authority; distribution of the PCR should be as follows:

- a) one copy (white) must be retained locally (with Branch or Brigade Unit) for St. John Ambulance records. From time to time Council may request a photocopy of the white copy in response to a record release request.
- a) one copy (canary) is given to emergency medical/hospital personnel upon transfer of the patient.

In instances requiring a delegating Medical Authority (e.g. every time an Automated External Defibrillator is used), distribution of the PCR should be as follows:

- a) one copy (white) must be retained locally (with Branch or Brigade Unit) for St. John Ambulance records. From time to time Council may request a photocopy of the white copy in response to a record release request.
- b) one copy (canary) is given to emergency medical/hospital personnel upon transfer of the patient, with a rhythm strip attached (if possible);
- c) one copy (pink), along with a rhythm strip (or data download) attached must be sent to the St. John Ambulance AED Medical Director, c/o the Community Services department at Council. This copy is used for quality assurance, data management, and follow-up.

Patient Care Records should be retained in a safe and secure location (i.e. filed alphabetically, by year, in a locked box marked Confidential Patient Care Records) for a minimum of **five** years. This is the responsibility of the Superintendent/Coordinator or his/her delegate. Some provinces/territories have laws that specifically order the length of time records need to be retained if a physician or nurse treated the patient, whether or not they are St. John Ambulance members.

The PCR is the only documentation that offers proof of the type and level of care that was provided by St. John Ambulance to the patient. Be aware that these records may be called upon for use during legal proceedings, a coroner's inquest, insurance claims, worker's compensation claims, etc. Timely and accurate completion of the PCR will assist you in answering for your actions in a secure and competent manner if you are called upon to do so.

Where a member performs patient care under supervision, the PCR should be completed and signed by the patient care provider, but should also be reviewed and signed by the patient care provider's supervisor.

Blank copies of the triplicate Patient Care Record are available from the St. John Council for Ontario.

### **REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF PATIENT CARE RECORDS**

There is a reasonable expectation that St. John Ambulance will maintain confidentiality with respect to the release of a patient's record of care. The patient may waive his or her right to confidentiality and authorize the release of their patient care record, however the patient's agent or representative (i.e. insurance company or lawyer) cannot authorize release of the record.

All requests for release of patient care records are to be forwarded with copies of associated documentation, including a copy of the requested patient care record to the:

Provincial Commissioner  
St. John Council for Ontario  
46 Wellesley Street East  
Toronto, ON M4Y 1G5

Requests will be reviewed and actioned in accordance with the following guidelines.

### **GUIDELINES FOR RELEASE OF PATIENT CARE RECORDS**

#### **Release of patient care records to the patient or his/her representative**

The patient can, using the prescribed form (Annex B), request access to their patient care record. Access to patient care records can only be given to the patient's agent or representative, if that representative has written proof that he or she has been authorized to request the release of medical information by the patient; and the authorization is signed by the patient. The release/authorization and patient care record must be retained in a secure place.

It is important that a copy of the patient care record and associated documentation, only be sent to the person specifically described in the direction signed by the patient. Unless otherwise directed by court order, only copies of the original patient care record should be released. The original record must be retained. When release of the original patient care record is required, a copy of the original record must be retained.

#### **Release of information to an event organizer**

The organizer of an event to which St. John Ambulance has been invited does not have the right to confidential patient information, including the patient care record. Members should advise event organizers that St. John Ambulance has an absolute obligation to

maintain confidentiality to patients, but will provide whatever assistance and information they can. i.e. statistical information or other information that does not reveal the identity of the patient.

### **Release of information to law enforcement agencies**

A police officer involved in providing medical assistance to a patient is entitled to access the patient care record. A law enforcement agency does not have an automatic right to confidential patient information, and any requests for release of patient care records to law enforcement agencies should be forwarded to the Provincial Commissioner and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

### **Release of information to health care agencies and their employees**

A person who continues to provide medical care to the patient once St. John Ambulance personnel have completed their work is entitled to the patient care records and medical information, however St. John Ambulance should retain the patient care records and wherever possible, provide the health care agency or professional with a copy of the patient care record.

In situations where it is not possible to provide a health care agency or professional with a copy of the patient care record and the original patient care record must be given to the health care agency or professional, St. John Ambulance personnel should advise the health care professional that the original patient care record must be returned to St. John Ambulance at the earliest opportunity.

St. John Ambulance personnel should note the fact that the original record has been given to another health care professional, and they should note the health care professional's name, telephone number and address and the time and date when the record was handed over. A brief summary of the problem and the treatment provided would also be appropriate. St. John Ambulance should then follow up on the patient care record and ensure that it is returned.

Authority



Provincial Commissioner