

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



ITEM: 3.4
(ID # 22518)

MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, July 18, 2023

FROM : EXECUTIVE OFFICE:

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE OFFICE: Approval of the Response to the 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report: You Call 9-1-1: Then What? Riverside County Emergency Department Delays May Impact Your Care and Direct the Response to the Grand Jury, Presiding Judge, and County Clerk-Recorder.; All Districts. [\$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve, with or without modification, the attached response to the 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report: You Call 9-1-1: Then What? Riverside County hospital emergency department delays may impact your care; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to immediately forward the Board's finalized responses to the Grand Jury, the Presiding Judge, and the County Clerk-Recorder.

ACTION:Policy

Juan C. Perez, Chief Operating Officer

7/13/2023

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Perez, seconded by Supervisor Washington and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Jeffries, Spiegel, Perez, Washington, and Gutierrez
Nays: None
Absent: None
Date: July 18, 2023
xc: E.O., Grand Jury, Presiding Judge, Recorder

Kimberly A. Rector
Clerk of the Board

By:
Deputy

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
NET COUNTY COST	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A			Budget Adjustment:	No
			For Fiscal Year:	20/21

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

Penal Code Section 933(c) requires Board of Supervisors comment on the Grand Jury's recommendations pertaining to matters under the Board's control. In addition, responses must be provided to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court within 90 days of receipt of the report.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A. 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report: You Call 9-1-1: Then What?

ATTACHMENT B. Grand Jury Response: You Call 9-1-1: Then What?

Kelly Moran
 Kelly Moran, Deputy County Counsel 7/10/2023

2022-2023 Grand Jury Report

You Call 9-1-1: Then What?

Riverside County hospital emergency department delays may impact
your care

April 19, 2023

GRAND JURY FINDINGS:

Grand Jury Finding #1:

Patients remaining on ambulance gurneys experience extended delays prior to transfer of care. This is common at most hospital emergency departments in Riverside County.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #1:

The respondents disagree partially with the finding.

The County of Riverside agrees wholly that many hospital Emergency Departments (ED) in Riverside County are requiring arriving EMS personnel to keep patients on ambulance gurneys for an extended period of time. However, when Ambulance Patient Offload Delay (APOD) occurs, transfer of care and removal of the patient from the ambulance gurney do not happen simultaneously. Legal transfer of care and assumption of patient responsibility by the hospital ED is complete when EMS personnel arrive in the ED and provide a patient report to ED staff. Universally, ED medical staff are using that report and visual assessment to “triage” patients upon arrival. ED medical staff then determine if emergent care is required resulting in immediate transfer of the patient to an ED bed or if the patient can wait for ED care requiring the EMS staff hold the patient on the gurney somewhere in or close to the ED. EMS personnel are unable to return to service; however, on-going patient care is the responsibility of the hospital ED staff despite the patient remaining on the ambulance gurney with EMS personnel in attendance. Therefore, it is not the “transfer of care” but rather the patient remaining on the ambulance gurney that creates APOD. This is a technical but important legal and EMS policy distinction to assure patients receive the appropriate standard of care. Riverside County EMS Agency (REMSA) Policy 4109 further outlines the transfer of patient care, which is based on California Health and Safety Code <http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/cacode/HSC/1/d2.5>.

Grand Jury Finding #2:

When ambulances and fire personnel are experiencing ambulance patient offload delays (APOD), the dispatch system has fewer available ambulances and fire vehicles for response to 9-1-1 calls. This is a public safety issue.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #2:

The respondent agrees with the finding.

When ED medical staff require EMS personnel to keep patients on the ambulance gurney for extended periods of time after arrival at the hospital, there are fewer ambulances available to respond to 9-1-1 calls. Fewer ambulances available results in longer response times. Longer response times for ambulances result in Fire Department first responders waiting for ambulances to arrive and delays transport of patients to the hospital. Additionally, Fire Department personnel must remain on-scene longer which decreases their availability for both fire/rescue and EMS response. Fire department personnel also frequently continue care during transport to the hospital and can experience delayed turn-around times when APOD occurs, further degrading fire resource availability. Hospital EDs must insure both rapid transfer of care and removal of patients from ambulance gurneys so that all emergency ambulances and Fire/EMS personnel are able to return to service as quickly as possible.

Grand Jury Finding #3:

Riverside University Health System (RUHS), as well as other Riverside County high performing hospitals have assessed and implemented improvements necessary for their hospital emergency department, specifically to reduce their time of APOD.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #3:

The respondents agree with the finding.

The culture within RUHS Medical Center and other high performing hospitals acknowledge the importance of releasing ambulances back to the community as quickly as possible because it is understood they are needed for 9-1-1 response. RUHS Medical Center remains committed to leading by example, receiving the highest ambulance volumes with exceptionally low offload times. RUHS Medical Center will continue to share best practices and learning from others as they are always striving to build on excellence internally and throughout the county. To assure effective communication and focus the attention of hospital administrators on the APOD problem, the Riverside County EMS Agency (REMSA) publishes weekly and monthly reports that include the patient offload time performance for every hospital in the County. These reports are made public and are disseminated to all EMS stakeholders. The reports show high performing hospitals within the system benchmarks. Reports going back five (5) years can be accessed at: <https://www.rivcoems.org/Documents/Reports-Current>

Grand Jury Finding #4:

Many professional organizations, county departments and state government have investigated and reported on the issues of APOD (delays over 30 minutes at a hospital emergency

department prior to transfer of care). These efforts, while commendable, have not resolved the delays at all Riverside County hospitals.

Response to Grand Jury Finding #4:

The respondents agree with the findings.

The Riverside County EMS Agency (REMSA) has published weekly and monthly APOD reports that include the patient offload time performance for every hospital in the County. These reports are made public and are disseminated to all EMS stakeholders. The reports show the hospitals that have been unable to resolve ambulance patient offload delays. Formal written notification, phone calls and face to face meetings occur regularly between these hospitals and REMSA administration. Despite these efforts, some hospitals continue to underperform. For hospitals that remain consistent outliers, legislative, regulatory, and cost recovery initiatives are being explored, which require state legislative action. Reports going back five (5) years can be accessed at: <https://www.rivcoems.org/Documents/Reports-Current>

GRAND JURY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

Riverside County Board of Supervisors to review, approve and support programs, including telehealth and Safety-Net Ambulance Programs throughout Riverside County to alleviate ambulance patient offload delays as recommended by EMS and Riverside County Fire Department.

- Finding 1, Finding 2, Finding 4
- Financial impact: minimal to moderate, ~\$200,000 per “fully stocked” Safety Net Ambulance Program
- Time frame: by June 30, 2024

Response to Grand Jury #1:

The recommendation requires further analysis.

This will be evaluated as REMSA works with system partners to update the EMS System Strategic Plan.

Also, REMSA is currently working with all EMS system partners for implementation of the EMS Telemedicine Program. Agreements are being developed and REMSA expects the program will be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for approval within the recommended timeframe.

The appropriate departments will return to the Board of Supervisors within six-months of the issuance of the Grand Jury report with an update on Recommendation #3.

Grand Jury Recommendation #2:

EMS to encourage and facilitate other hospitals in Riverside County to systematically work with REMSA to implement improvements similar to Riverside University Health Systems (RUHS) and other high performing hospitals using “best practices” to decrease APOD at the hospital emergency departments.

- Finding 1, Finding 3
- Financial impact: minimal to moderate
- Time frame: by June 30, 2024

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #2:

The recommendation has been implemented.

REMSA has led or participated in all local and State initiatives directed at reducing APOD. These include but are not limited to activities outlined on Pages 13 and 14 of the report. Additionally, since the report was published the REMSA Administrator and Clinical Nurse Manager have conducted meetings with leadership at the hospitals struggling with APOD. Specifically, an individual review of the hospitals offload performance, data collection and metrics, improvement best practices and REMSA expectations for improvement.

REMSA and RUHS Medical Center will continue their close partnership that provides EMS system partners with both formal and informal solutions to improve APOD. RUHS MC has implemented the Emergency Department Alliance Committee which will build on their commitment to partner with the local area hospitals to find and share challenges and best practice opportunities in different ways and venues.

Grand Jury Recommendation #3:

As an interim solution, Riverside County Fire Department and AMR to utilize available personnel to relieve delayed fire and/or ambulance teams at the hospital emergency departments. The goal is for efficient transfer of care of the patient to the hospital emergency departments while releasing the emergency vehicles for the next 9-1-1 call.

- Finding 1, Finding 2, Finding 3
- Financial impact: minimal to moderate
- Time frame: June 30, 2024

Response to Grand Jury Recommendation #3:

The recommendation has been evaluated and will not be implemented as it is not warranted.

During the COVID emergency EMS personnel were utilized at some hospitals to mitigate record high APOD. AMR provided some staff, REMSA secured additional staff through the Statewide Medical Mutual Aid System. Utilization of paramedics for this purpose was made possible through executive order from the Governor that temporarily modified the venue of practice to include hospitals. Those executive orders ended when the State of Emergency was rescinded in March 2023. That effectively ends the possibility of utilizing paramedics for this purpose. EMTs may be utilized for this purpose however REMSA and all EMS system partners wholly disagree that it should be EMS provider agency staff that is utilized. All EMS providers within the County are currently experiencing staffing shortages. Utilizing their staff to support underperforming hospitals would further degrade EMS system resource availability. Hospitals can and should consider employing their own EMTs or other medical staff that can monitor patients in the ED and thereby facilitate rapid release of emergency ambulances and EMS personnel. This is universally identified as a best practice for hospitals to improve APOD.