

Procedure:	Base Hospital Palliative Physician Patching	
Owner of Policy:	Manager, Quality and Business Systems	
Department/Program:	Southwest Ontario Regional Base Hospital Program	
Endorsed By:	Director, Southwest Centre for Prehospital Medicine	Endorsement Date: May 2025
Original Effective Date:	May 2024	Date Reviewed: May 2026

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the actions for paramedics working with palliative care patients under the Palliative Care Treat and Refer Medical Directive (PCTRMD). It provides guidance on the procedure to follow when a paramedic encounters a rostered palliative patient and is required to patch in with a palliative base hospital physician (PBHP), including escalation procedures in case of challenges with the centralized patching system.

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The Southwest Ontario Regional Base Hospital Program (SWORBHP) utilizes a centralized patching system to connect paramedics with PBHPs. The palliative patch line is provided to support paramedics who work for paramedic services that have adopted the PCTRMD. The PBHPs are specific to the paramedic services they work with. The patching system consists of a patch line where paramedics will be presented with a phone menu. The menu options will identify paramedic services. Once a menu item is chosen, the call will be routed to the corresponding PBHP service.

POLICY

Paramedics are required to patch to a PBHP for medical direction, orders, and guidance in accordance with the PCTRMD. When paramedics who work for a paramedic service that has adopted the PCTRMD are presented with a rostered palliative patient and need to speak to a PBHP, they will use the palliative patch line phone numbers provided by SWORBHP for their paramedic service. For all other cases when medical direction or guidance is required, paramedics will leverage the primary BHP patching system, as outlined in the Base Hospital Physician Patching policy. Medical direction and guidance can only be provided by a trained BHP. Paramedics will not attempt to patch to a BHP outside of the patching system.

PROCEDURE

1. Paramedic Patching Procedure to Connect with a Palliative Base Hospital Physician

- 1.1. The paramedic will call the PBHP patch number (as provided by SWORBHP).
- 1.2. The paramedic will choose the menu option corresponding to their service or the PBHP group they are trying to reach.
- 1.3. If a PBHP cannot be reached, the paramedic will:
 - 1.3.1. Disconnect the call.
 - 1.3.2. Wait a moment and call the palliative patch line again.
 - 1.3.3. Do not leave a voice message if the call goes to voicemail.
- 1.4. If the second attempt fails, the paramedic will:
 - 1.4.1. Disconnect the call.

- 1.5. Further attempts can be made so long as it is in the best interest of the patient and does not risk patient safety.
- 1.6. If a PBHP cannot be reached to provide medical advice or orders, the paramedic will document a patch failure in the Ambulance Care Report. If this is a critical incident, proceed with regular operating procedures, and the paramedic will escalate it to their Employer.
- 1.7. When the phone is answered, if the recipient is not the intended physician (e.g., nurse), the paramedic will request that the palliative base hospital physician take the call.
- 1.8. If technological or human factors issues are encountered, the paramedic will escalate the issue to their Employer and self-report the call detailing their concerns.

2. Escalation Procedure

- 2.1. If the concern appears to be an outage or technology related.
- 2.2. The Employer will escalate the issue to SWORBHP by emailing sworbhp@lhsc.on.ca or by calling the main line 519-667-6718.
 - 2.2.1.1. SWORBHP will determine if there is an issue with the patch line.
 - 2.2.1.2. SWORBHP and the Employer will work to resolve the issue.
 - 2.2.1.3. SWORBHP and the Employer will collaborate to determine an interim solution if necessary.

REFERENCES

[Advanced Life Support Patient Care Standards Version 5.4](#)

Emergency Health Services Branch, Ministry of Health

[Basic Life Support Patient Care Standards Version 3.4](#)

Emergency Health Services Branch Ministry of Health, March 10, 2023

[Ontario Regulation 257/00, Ambulance Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. A. 19](#)