



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Provisional Committee on Pediatric Emergency Medicine

Pediatrician's Role in Emergency Medical Services for Children

To reduce the morbidity and mortality of critically ill and injured children, comprehensive care must be provided. This includes effective services and treatment from the onset of the illness or injury through definitive care. Pediatricians should counsel families not only about prevention of disease and injury but also about access to pediatric emergency care resources in their region. If the interval between recognition of illness and delivery of care is to be reduced to a minimum, a pre-hospital protocol must be established. Parents as well as prehospital care providers must be knowledgeable about their community's prehospital protocol for life-threatening illness or injury.

Primary care pediatricians need to establish networks with hospital-based pediatricians, emergency physicians, pediatric surgeons, and other pediatric medical and pediatric surgical specialists so that there is clearly assigned responsibility for provision of pediatric emergency care.¹ When available, a pediatric surgeon should take charge of the child with multiple traumatic injuries. Optimally, the pediatric emergency care delivery system will be comprehensive and designed to meet the unique needs of children. The specific objectives of an emergency medical services for children (EMS-C) system should remain constant even though available resources may vary from region to region. For an EMS-C system to be most effective, practitioners need to develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience necessary to provide essential life support for ill and injured children.

Many regions currently have well-developed emergency medical services (EMS) systems with outstanding capability and sophistication but most have been designed to meet the needs of adults.² Pediatricians should advocate for modification of emergency delivery systems to include

the components necessary for the special needs of the child. Such EMS-C systems should be responsible for both medical and surgical emergencies. Where population density is adequate, pediatricians should concentrate their referrals of critically ill and injured children to the EMS-C center to provide adequate patient volume for maintenance of skills and cost-effectiveness. Through a united effort, pediatricians should assure emergency department coverage on a 24-hour basis by physicians educated about, experienced in, and committed to the provision of optimum pediatric emergency care. Input and supervision by both pediatricians and other pediatric specialists are essential for the appropriate development, implementation, and monitoring of the ideal EMS-C system.

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Pediatrician's Role in Emergency Medical Services for Children
Pediatrics 1988;81;735

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PEDIATRICS®

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

Pediatrician's Role in Emergency Medical Services for Children *Pediatrics* 1988;81;735

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