

Patient Death at the Facility

Patients at Stepworks are vulnerable to unexpected medical events. Their history of substance abuse puts them at a higher risk of sudden death. If a patient dies at a Stepworks facility or is found unresponsive and later dies at the hospital, follow these protocols.

Any Team Member Involved

If a patient is found unresponsive without a pulse...

- one person should begin CPR while another calls 911 and gets the AED and Narcan
- follow the instructions on the AED; continue CPR until first responders arrive
- administer a dose of Narcan
- contact the facility administrator and medical director
- if there is vomit or bodily fluids around the patient, point this out to the medics
- if there is obvious evidence of drug use, point this out to law enforcement

After the patient is taken to the hospital...

- each team member involved should thoroughly document the incident as soon as possible in the EMR
 - include times and durations (approximate if the exact time is not known)
 - include specific observations about the patient (e.g. color and feel of skin, description of how the patient was found, if the patient was bleeding or foaming at the mouth)
- the shift supervisor (or nurse if no shift supervisor is present) should file an incident report with other involved team members completing witness statements

Facility Administrator

First Steps

- Ensure the facility medical director has been notified.
- Contact the director of residential operations.
- Reassure/comfort your team members and ensure they complete documentation (EMR and incident reporting).
- Notify the patient's next of kin.

Environment

- Note any anomalies in the patient's room and where they were found (e.g. signs of a fall, vomit, blood, bodily fluid, etc.)
 - Photograph/video any findings.
 - Document in the EMR.
- Using gloves and extreme caution, search the room for drugs/paraphernalia.
 - Document the results of the search.
 - If drugs/paraphernalia are found, bag and lock in the safe (for law enforcement).
- If the patient was found in or close to their bed, bag up their linens and set aside for one week in case law enforcement asks for it. They can then be laundered.
- Bag up their belongings and set aside.
- The room can then be cleaned.

Interviews

- Interview any patient witnesses and document these conversations in the EMR.
- Ask the team members involved to each write a narrative statement describing all of the events. This should be as detailed as possible and can go beyond what you would normally document in the chart.
 - Include yourself and the medical director.
 - These should be emailed to the COO.

Team Debriefing

- Discuss with the director of residential operations (who consults with the COO) what details should be released to our team and patients.
- Notify other team members.
- Minimize any speculation by our team members. Accurate details must follow an autopsy (6-8 weeks).
- Team members must not discuss the death with outside persons.
- Notify them that the point person for any media, law enforcement, or the coroner will be the COO. The COO is the only person who can speak to these entities on behalf of Stepworks.
- Offer counseling to our team.

Patient Debriefing

- With a therapist present, notify the patients during a community meeting. (If this happened on a weekend, a therapist should come in.)
- The therapists should address this one-on-one with all patients during individual sessions and include this in their documentation.

Security Video Review

- Review pertinent cameras and make a note of time stamps.

- Ask IT to retrieve these and coordinate storage with the COO.
- If the times or events are significantly different than what is documented, notify the director of residential operations.

Facility Administrator Debrief

- Remind your team that these terrible events cannot always be prevented. Addiction is a chronic, relapsing, and deadly disease. Stepworks continually evaluates and refines our processes out of a deep passion for the life of every patient.
- From your perspective, is there anything your team could do to further protect against this type of horrible event?
- From your perspective, is there anything the company could do to further protect against this type of horrible event?
- Write a statement and email it to the COO.