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**DATE:** August 4, 2021

**TO:** Emergency Receiving Center CEOs  
Emergency Receiving Center ED Medical Directors  
ALS and BLS Ambulance Providers  
911 Service Providers  
Base Hospital Coordinators

**SUBJECT:** Voluntary Actions Needed to Improve Ambulance Patient Offload Times (APOT) and Ambulance Diversion Hours

As the number of COVID infected patients arriving at local hospitals continues to increase, both the numbers of hospitals going on ambulance diversion and the associated 90% APOTs are rising. In the last 24 hours, Orange County EMS has recorded 90% APOTs at 44 minutes with 16 hospitals exceeding the 30-minute standard and five hospitals exceeding 60 minutes. In addition, 12 hospitals requested ambulance diversion for a total of 112 diversion hours. These data do not just represent an isolated episode, but are part of a general trend over weeks, and are associated with an increase in number of hospitalized and ICU patients infected with SARS-CoV-2.

This is not sustainable. We have not witnessed increases in ambulance related numbers of this magnitude since the worst days of the second surge in December of 2020 and January of 2021. Should this situation persist, it potentially puts the health and safety of those seeking ambulance transport to Emergency Receiving Center hospitals (ERCs) at risk.

Therefore, I am requesting that all ERCs initiate further strategies and interventions to reduce APOTs and diversion hours. Given that the situation and conditions at each ERC may be unique, I am hoping that each center will utilize individual resources and approaches as they see fit to reduce these times to more traditional levels.

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I understand the burden Orange County hospitals face and that no easy solution exists. However, taking no action is not an option. While the request at this point is for voluntary intervention, should these times persist at their current level or get worse, I will consider additional directives, including eliminating ambulance diversion and requesting action by the Orange County Public Health Officer.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carl Schultz, MD". The signature is cursive and includes a small "MD" at the end.

Carl H. Schultz, MD  
EMS Medical Director  
Orange County Health Care Agency

CS:cs#4071