


Triage Program Overview

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	Anytime Pediatrics: Triage Program Overview	
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Responsible Party: Anytime Pediatrics Leadership	Institution/Entries Applies to: Anytime Pediatrics
Policy Number AP 017	Originating Department: Nurse Triage
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OVERVIEW:

The American Academy of Ambulatory Nursing (AAACN) describes Telephone Triage as a component of telephone nursing practice that focuses on assessment, prioritization, and referral to the appropriate level of care. Triage is a program that handles incoming calls (“nurse triage calls”) from or on behalf of patients who have expressed acute symptoms or the need to receive advice or guidance from a triage nurse.

DEFINITION:

Telephone Triage is defined by the American Academy for Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) as “An interactive process between nurse and client that occurs over the telephone and involves identifying the nature and urgency of client health care needs and determining appropriate disposition.” (AAACN, 2003)

More specifically, Telephone Triage is an encounter with a patient/caller in which a specially trained, experienced nurse, utilizing clinical judgment and the nursing process, is guided by medically approved decision support tools (protocols), to determine the urgency of the patient’s problem, and to direct the patient to the appropriate level of care. This plan of care is developed in collaboration with the caller and includes patient education and/or advice as appropriate and necessary and follow-up as indicated to assure a safe outcome.

OBJECTIVE:

Telephone Triage is an essential element of patient care delivery. It is designed primarily to facilitate access to care and to provide consultation and assistance to patients and their families regarding healthcare information, home care measures, and navigation of the health care system. The primary purpose of Telephone Triage is to assure patient safety and improve quality of care.

Program objectives include:

- Enhanced customer relations
- Improved resource utilization
- Enhanced patient empowerment and patient self-management
- Reduced organizational risk, and indirectly, cost containment.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:

The Telehealth Nursing Practice Administration and Practice Standards developed by the American Academy for Ambulatory Care Nursing (AAACN) shall serve as guidelines for implementation of Telephone Triage.