

Guideline

Emergency Department Referrals to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline

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Policy developed by: Health System Performance
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Summary This Guideline provides Local Health Networks (LHN) employees and agents involved in the delivery of specialist outpatient services a consistent and structured approach to the management of referrals from Emergency Departments (ED) to specialist outpatient services. This Guideline aims to streamline the process and enhance communication relating to specialist outpatient services for patients, staff and referrers.

Keywords Specialist Outpatient Services, Emergency Department referrals, Guideline

Policy history Is this a new policy? **Y**
 Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **N**
 Does this policy replace an existing policy? **N**

Applies to All SA Health Portfolio
 All Department for Health and Ageing Divisions
 All Local Health Networks

Staff impact All Staff, Management, Admin, Students; Volunteers
 All Clinical, Medical, Nursing, Allied Health, Emergency, Dental, Mental Health, Pathology, Midwifery

PDS reference G0119

Version control and change history

Version	Date from	Date to	Amendment
1.0	6/09/2012	current	Original version



Emergency Department Referrals into Specialist Outpatient Services Policy

1. Purpose/Background

This Guideline provides Local Health Networks (LHN) employees and agents involved in the delivery of specialist outpatient services a consistent and structured approach to the management of referrals from Emergency Departments (ED) to specialist outpatient services.

This Guideline aims to streamline the process and enhance communication relating to specialist outpatient services for patients, staff and referrers.

This Guideline is to be read in conjunction with the Specialist Outpatient Services Directive.

2. Responsibility

This guideline articulates the rights and responsibilities of:

- Medical and other health practitioners who refer patients for specialist outpatient services
- Clinicians, Administrative, and support staff who manage the referrals in the specialist outpatient services

Ensuring this Guideline is supported remains the responsibility of all employees involved in making the referral, receiving the referral and ensuring ongoing management of the referral.

LHN Chief Executives are responsible for ensuring that all specialist outpatient services introduce and manage a system wide Referral Policy.

3. Guideline Detail

The General Practitioner (GP) is the patient's primary carer and as such will have responsibility for initiating referrals into specialist outpatient services.

Where Emergency Department (ED) medical employees identify that a specialist outpatient appointment is required, the patient should be returned to the GP and the GP should instigate the referral. ED medical employees are to provide the GP with a letter outlining the type of specialist outpatient clinic required and the rationale for the outpatient appointment.

Exceptions to this process can be made:

- where clinical indication is warranted
- where there is a specific pathway/guideline in place necessitating a direct referral to specialist outpatient services from the ED.

- where the speciality consultant has specifically requested a specialist outpatient service as a hospital avoidance measure, thereby avoiding an inpatient hospital episode.

In these instances a direct referral to specialist outpatient services from the ED is acceptable. Referrals should be in line with the *Referral to Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline*.

4. Definitions

Employee: Is employed by SA Health to perform a job subject to the directions of the workplace. Each employee has a contract of employment.

General Practitioner: A medical practitioner who works in primary health care and refers patients to specialist medical care.

Specialist: A medical practitioner who has become specialised in a specific area of medicine.

Specialist Outpatient Service: Specialist outpatient services provided by a specialist or expert clinician that is recognised by the relevant professional college, board or association

Referral: A request for a specialist consultation.

5. Associated Directives and/or Guidelines

eA523220	Specialist Outpatient Services
eA524282	Referral to Specialist Outpatient Services
eA524285	Specialist Outpatient Services Patient Focussed Bookings Guideline
eA524289	Active Discharge from Specialist Outpatient Services Guideline
eA518245	Medicare Billing for Private Non-admitted Patients in SA Health Local Health Network Outpatient Clinics

6. References

Nil.