


Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service FIRE CHIEF'S GENERAL ORDER

FCGO: 20-07

November 22, 2020

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TO: All MCFRS Personnel
FROM: Fire Chief Scott E. Goldstein 
SUBJECT: **ALS to BLS Downgrade Process**

MCFRS utilizes a tiered response for EMS dispatch. Patients who are assessed by an ALS clinician then transferred to a BLS clinician for transport require an ALS to BLS downgrade. The organization strongly supports reasonable downgrade decisions provided they are based on sound judgement and account for all available information and assessment findings. This FCGO provides the framework for a consistent, reliable, and accountable downgrade process.

REQUIREMENT TO ENGAGE

A high-risk chief complaint warrants an ALS assessment. Any patient dispatched at the ALS level with whom an ALS clinician makes physical or visual contact will receive an assessment by the ALS clinician. The ALS clinician will determine the need for ALS care based on their own assessment.

A BLS clinician who arrives prior to the ALS unit on an ALS dispatch may place the responding ALS unit in service only when:

- a chief complaint, complete history and full set of vital signs are obtained prior to arrival of the ALS unit, and
- the patient has no high-risk chief complaint and does not require ALS assessment, monitoring, or transport.

DOWNGRADE TIMEOUT

Should an ALS clinician determine that a patient is appropriate for downgrade, they must conduct a "downgrade timeout" where the ALS and BLS clinicians discuss the case and complete and sign the downgrade checklist in eMEDS ELITE.

DOWNGRADE CHECKLIST

The downgrade checklist is a worksheet that contains validated, reliable, and objective data points that indicate when a patient can be safely downgraded. The downgrade checklist becomes part of the patient care report and it may be completed in either the ALS or the BLS report. The ALS clinician must also

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document a downgrade in accordance with MCFRS Policy and Procedure 02-01-AMIII, *Incident Reporting Requirements and Records Management*, Section 7.f.3.L. The ALS clinician must write a thorough narrative to communicate any downgrade decision that deviates from the recommendation of the downgrade checklist.

Questions or concerns regarding this document may be directed to the EMIHS Section Chief via the Chain of Command.

