



# STATE OF IDAHO

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE

FACILITY STANDARDS PROGRAM  
420 W. WASHINGTON  
BOISE, ID 83720 334-5325

INFORMATIONAL LETTER #86-3

DATE: July 3, 1986  
TO: Administrators of Idaho Hospitals  
FROM: Jean Schoonover, R.N.  
Program Manager  
SUBJECT: Use of R.N.'s and P.A.'s in Emergency Rooms

The attached Health Standards and Quality Bureau Letter number 187 clarifies the use of registered nurses and physician assistants in hospital emergency rooms.

If you have any questions on this clarification, please call or write this office.

  
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Jean Schoonover, R.N., Manager

/dk

Enclosure



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Health Care  
Financing Administration

Region X  
M/S 409  
2901 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98121

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June 4, 1986

DIVISION OF HEALTH STANDARDS AND QUALITY  
STATE LETTER No. 187

SUBJECT INDEX CATEGORY: 7

SUBJECT: HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM SERVICES

This letter clarifies HCFA policy regarding the use of registered nurses and physician assistants in hospital emergency rooms.

42 CFR 405.1033 (c)(3) states that a physician must see all patients who arrive for treatment in the emergency room. The interpretation of this requirement provided by the Bureau of Eligibility, Reimbursement and Coverage is that a physician must see all patients who are determined to need emergency care.

A registered nurse or a physician assistant may be utilized for purposes of triage, in accordance with State laws and hospital bylaws, to screen out those patients who do not have a true emergency requiring the services of a physician. All patients determined to have a medical emergency must, however, be seen by a physician.

Because there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a medical emergency, the surveyor must determine if the facility has formulated criteria regarding which patients must be seen by a physician and which may be seen by a registered nurse or physician assistant. Secondly, the surveyor must review emergency room records to ascertain if the facility is following its own criteria.

If you have any questions, please call Arthur E. Lagace, Ph.D. at (206)442-0767.

Sincerely,

Thomas G. Wallner  
Associate Regional Administrator  
Division of Health Standards and Quality