

SOLICITING COMMENTS FOR DRAFT HOSPITAL URGENT CARE REGULATIONS

In 2003, Governor Rendell, through the Office of Health Care Reform announced the Prescription for Pennsylvania (Rx for PA). The goal of the RX for PA is to improve the health care of all Pennsylvanians, by making the health care system more efficient and containing its cost. The focus of the Rx for PA is on quality, affordability and accessibility of health care services.

These draft regulations would address a problem experienced by many health care providers and consumers regarding the overcrowding of hospital emergency rooms. Emergency departments in Pennsylvania have been treating an increasing number of people. One reason for this increase is that many people, particularly men, minorities and the poor, lack a personal health care provider. Even those who do have a regular provider often do not have access to health care services during the evening or weekends. As a consequence, this often leads to delays in seeking treatment and the unnecessary use of hospital emergency departments, both of which affect quality outcomes for the patient and the cost to the system as a whole.

The draft regulations would require that hospitals establish a separate area of the hospital or enter into a contractual arrangement with an entity located not more than 15 miles from the hospital to provide treatment for urgent care services. The hospital would be required to establish a protocol and procedure through which an assessment will be made as to whether the person presenting to the hospital appears to have an emergency medical condition and needs to be referred to the emergency department. The draft regulations

would require that those patients who do not have an emergency medical condition but appear to have an urgent care medical condition be referred to another area for treatment. This urgent care services area would be located either in the hospital or at a site no more than 15 miles from the hospital. This would assist the hospital in preserving the emergency department for those patients in need of emergency treatment and also ensure that patients in need of urgent care services will receive such treatment at an appropriate location in a less costly and more efficient manner than providing such services in the emergency department.

Click [here](#) for draft hospital urgent care regulations posted online May 22, 2009 for comment. Written comments will be accepted until June 30, 2009, by mail, fax or hand delivery to:

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Bureau of Facility Licensure and Certification
625 Forster Street
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Harrisburg, PA-17120
Attn: Hospital Urgent Care Regulations—Comments

Fax: (717) 705-7298

Comments received will be considered by the Department in the development of proposed regulations to be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* for public comment.

If you have any questions about the draft regulations or the submission of comments during the comment period, please contact the Bureau of Facility Licensure and Certification, (717) 787-8015.