
CODE YELLOW – Missing Patients/residents

Approved by: Administration

Effective Date: April 26, 2019

EP-07

Issued By: Administration

Revised Date: Oct 23, 2025

Department(s) All

POLICY

Lennox & Addington County General Hospital (“LACGH”) is committed to the safety of patients, residents and staff. In order to ensure patient and resident safety, LACGH shall initiate a **CODE YELLOW** response in the event of a missing patient or resident to ensure a timely, coordinated and thorough search of the Hospital, LTC and grounds.

PURPOSE

The **CODE YELLOW** response ensures that all staff are aware of the required action in the event of a missing patients/residents.

NOTICE

Please be advised that Emergency Preparedness Code Processes apply to Lennox & Addington County General Hospital proper. Therefore, not all steps in Emergency Preparedness Codes are necessarily applicable to programs, clinics and departments located in Lenadco Building, or Westdale Complex (“the Outbuildings”). Please refer to program, clinic, or department specific internal Emergency Preparedness procedures for further guidance as the case may be.

GUIDELINES

The following general guidelines shall be followed:

- 1) **CODE YELLOW** initiates the alert to hospital/LTC staff to search for missing patient/resident.
- 2) All departments/units will be responsible for searching their own areas and any adjacent areas (i.e. lobbies, lounges, storage areas, stairwells, etc.).
- 3) The Police are to be contacted immediately for any patients/residents who are likely to harm themselves or others, or are seriously ill.

ACTIVATING A CODE YELLOW:

Once a patient/resident has been determined to be missing from the unit/department, staff will call a **CODE YELLOW**. The Most Responsible Person (“MRP”) for the department at the time will become the Incident Manager (“IM”) and is responsible for making the following decisions:

- when to notify the Police
- when to notify the patient/resident’s family/next-of-kin
- when to notify the patient/resident’s physician

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- when to notify the Administrator On Call
- The IM may change as staff with higher authority arrive on the scene.

PROCEDURE:

- 1) Staff on the unit where the patient/resident is missing will first search their own department and adjacent areas thoroughly. This search should not take more than 10 minutes.
- 2) If the patient/resident is not found during the initial search, a **CODE YELLOW** will be called. The MRP of the unit where the patients/resident is missing will assume the role of Incident Manager.
- 3) The unit/department will either notify Switchboard of the **CODE YELLOW** or the unit will page from their area ensuring that they provide the location of the incident, a complete description of the missing patient/resident (age, sex, clothing, height, weight, hair color, eye color etc.) as allowed by *Personal Health Information Protection Act*¹, (“PHIPA”) and the area where the patient/resident was last seen.
- 4) The announcement will be repeated over the PA system two (2) times.
- 5) Upon hearing the **CODE YELLOW** announcement, **all departments/units** will conduct an immediate search of their area and any adjacent areas. The search should not take more than 10 minutes. Check off areas as searched and sign name to the zone once search completed.

(See **APPENDIX I** Code Yellow Search Response Record (Staff Actions) and Code Yellow Search Checklist to help guide search).
- 6) Once each department/unit has completed their search, they will contact the unit directly that initiated the **CODE YELLOW** and inform them of findings by stating that the area searched is all clear or that the patient/resident has been located. The checklist that is completed and signed will be given to the Incident Manager to be incorporated into the [Emergency Response Report Form 423](#).
- 7) The Unit will record the time each department calls and the name of the person calling in, using the **APPENDIX I Zone Search Checklist** and **APPENDIX II Hospital Search Zones Maps**, including the date/time and name of person returning the call and if the patient/resident was found (yes/no).
- 8) The Unit will contact any area that has not called in within 15 minutes.

¹ **Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, CHAPTER 3, SCHEDULE A Disclosures related to risks**

40 (1) A health information custodian may disclose personal health information about an individual if the custodian believes on reasonable grounds that the disclosure is necessary for the purpose of eliminating or reducing a significant risk of serious bodily harm to a person or group of persons. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A, s. 40 (1).



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IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH DEPARTMENT TO CONTACT THE UNIT AFTER COMPLETION OF THEIR SEARCH

- 9) If the missing patient/resident is still not located, the Incident Manager will make the decision (if not done earlier) to notify the Police, physician, family/next-of-kin as well as the Administrator On Call.

The decision to call off the search, when a patient/resident has not been located rests with the Incident Manager. This decision may be made in consultation with the CEO and/or delegate and the Police.

- 10) A full description of the missing patient/resident will be provided to the Police.
- 11) Once the patient/resident is located or the search is called off, Switchboard will announce “**CODE YELLOW All Clear**”. This announcement will be repeated two (2) times.
- 12) Each Department is responsible for ensuring that Code Yellow Search Response Records are printed for use from the PPM via this policy.
- 13) **Notify the Ministry of Long-Term Care** - In the event of a LTC Resident Missing for more than 3 (three) hours, or less than three hours and returns to the home with no injury or any adverse change in condition under s.115(1) *O.Reg 246/22 Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021, SO 2021, c. 39, Sched. 1.*

DOCUMENTATION OF MISSING PATIENT/RESIDENT:

The following documentation must be completed and forwarded to the MRP for Risk:

- 1) Emergency Response Report on the missing patient/resident.
- 2) The completed Hospital Code Yellow Search Response Record – Appendix I (attach to incident report).
- 3) Any other relevant documentation made during the search.
- 4) Incident Manager to complete Incident Report in the Incident Reporting System.

The following information should be documented in the missing patient/resident Health Information System (“HIS”):

- 1) Time patient/resident first noted to be missing.
- 2) Time Code Yellow called.
- 3) Times Police, physician and family/next-of-kin notified.
- 4) Time patient/resident found.
- 5) Condition of patient/resident upon return to unit.



CODE YELLOW - Missing Person

APPENDIX I

CODE YELLOW SEARCH RESPONSE CHECKLIST

| | |
|---|---|
| A – PATIENT/RESIDENT SEARCH | ✓ |
| Patient Unit/RHA Searched (including 20m from exits) | |
| Liaise with persons in charge of other nearby unit/departments to complete a search of their area. Provide patients/residents description. | |
| Switchboard advised if on duty. Announce Code Yellow Overhead | |
| Admin on Call notified if on duty | |
| Security advised. | |
| Shift Handover - Communication | |
| B - PATIENT/RESIDENT FOUND | |
| Call Search Off – Announce Overhead | |
| Documentation on patient/resident record completed | |
| Admin On Call notified if on duty. Notify Patient/resident family and keep updated. | |
| Ministry of Long Term Care Notified (as above) if necessary | |
| All checklists completed and submitted with Emergency Response Report. | |
| Emergency Response Record Form 423 completed. | |
| Records from other staff (Appendices checklists) obtained and forwarded with Emergency Response Report to MRP Risk. | |
| Notify Insurer if applicable | |
| C - PATIENTS/RESIDENTS NOT FOUND | |
| Notify Admin On Call if on duty. Report progress as necessary. | |
| Notify Police – Name & Number of Officer and Police Encounter Number to be recorded: _____ | |
| Provide Police with Hospital Map and description of patient/resident. | |
| Detail further actions taken (continue on insert if needed) See #9 of procedure. | |
| Family Notified | |
| Assemble search team. | |
| Patients/residents Found – See Section B | |
| Police Assume Operational Management | |
| Ministry of Long Term Care Notified (as above) | |
| Senior Leadership Team to be updated | |
| Notify Insurer | |

CODE YELLOW ZONE SEARCH CHECKLIST

| ZERP (Ground) LEVEL Search Zone | Time | Individual Reporting | Patients/residents Found Y/N |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 0-1 | | | |
| 0-2 | | | |
| 0-3 | | | |
| 0-4 | | | |
| 0-5 | | | |
| 0-6 | | | |
| 0-7 | | | |

| FIRST LEVEL - Search Zone | Time | Individual Reporting | Patients/residents Found Y/N |
|---------------------------|------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1-1 | | | |
| 1-2 | | | |
| 1-3 | | | |
| 1-4 | | | |



CODE YELLOW - Missing Person

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 1-5 | | | |
| 1-6 | | | |
| 1-7 | | | |

| SECOND LEVEL - Search Zone | Time | Individual Reporting | Patients/residents Found Y/N |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2-1 | | | |
| 2-2 | | | |

**APPENDIX II
HOSPITAL SEARCH ZONE MAPS**

Contents Redacted due to Confidential Nature.