



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department**



PRESS RELEASE

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Right Care, Right Now Expands to Pediatric Patients

**Emergency Providers Can Now Connect Patients Ages 2 through 18 Years of Age
With Less Serious and Non-Life-Threatening Injuries/Conditions
To Primary Care Providers Near their Homes**

(WASHINGTON, DC) – Today, DC Fire and EMS Chief John A. Donnelly Sr. announced that on March 1, 2022, the *Right Care, Right Now* Nurse Triage Line will expand coverage to include pediatric patients. *Right Care, Right Now*, which launched in April 2018, connects adult patients who call 911 for less serious and non-life-threatening injuries and conditions to a nurse who connects them to primary care providers near their homes.

Now, first responders from DC Fire and EMS can refer patients ages 2 through 18 whose vital signs and symptoms indicate they may not need a trip to the emergency room to the *Right Care, Right Now* nurse triage line. The patient and/or parent/guardian will speak with the triage nurse and, if the nurse agrees that the pediatric patient would be best served in a primary care setting versus an emergency room, the nurse will identify a clinic in the patient's neighborhood where the patient will be able to receive medical care the very same day. The nurse triage line is available to DC Fire and EMS crews 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

Currently, *Right Care, Right Now* is offered to adult patients with less serious conditions during the initial call to 911 **before** emergency providers are dispatched. However, under phase one of the expansion for pediatric patients, the nurse triage line will only be offered to the patient **after** emergency providers arrive on scene, assess the pediatric patient's vital signs and symptoms, and confer with the parent or guardian.

According to a November 2021 study in *Prehospital Emergency Care*, national statistics reveal that 20% of adult patients who call 911 ultimately result in non-transport to the hospital, but that number jumps to 30% for pediatric patients. The same researchers are expanding to include focused study groups with caregivers and paramedics across the country to better understand the reasons why these 911 calls result in non-transport.

Dr. Robert Holman, Medical Director for DC Fire and EMS, who lead the planning and work to ensure proper protocols for the Department's providers were set prior to the launch of the expansion said, "Patient safety is the number one goal. We are sending our first responders out into the field with a valuable new tool to ensure the welfare of our younger patients and appropriate referral to the right level of medical care. 30% is a substantial and concerning number of children and their families who are calling 911 across the country but then aren't going to the hospital. If a child isn't feeling well but their case doesn't require emergency care, it doesn't mean they don't need to be evaluated by a doctor or a triage nurse. The expansion of *Right Care, Right Now* here in the District is critical in ensuring that our pediatric patients receive care by their medical team. Our priority must be our children and ensuring they have access to the care they need. This opens a door that previously didn't exist and can serve as a model to communities everywhere as we all work to tackle this nationwide issue."

The beginning phase of extending *Right Care, Right Now* to pediatric patients is the result of three years of planning. Dr. Caleb Ward, attending emergency physician at Children's National Hospital and Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine at George Washington University, helped to advise development of this expansion. He explained, "We conducted our study based upon data that we gathered from the National EMS database and discovered that 3 out of 10 children who are seen by EMS providers ultimately don't go to the emergency room and stay at home. There is clearly an urgent and unmet need to develop safe patient-centered alternatives like the *Right Care, Right Now* nurse triage line. It's not less care when you consider that 3 out of 10 children aren't going to hospital, the nurse triage line actually provides more care. We are very much looking forward to closely watching the outcomes of this initial rollout."

"Since the launch of *Right Care, Right Now* for adults three years ago, we have seen that the vast majority of patients referred to the program have a positive experience. Our patients like being able to go see a doctor in their neighborhood instead of waiting to be seen in an emergency room," said DC Fire and EMS Chief John A. Donnelly, Sr., "so we are excited to expand this program to include the same benefits for children."

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