



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

JUL 13 2004

HEALTH AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Policy on Reporting Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations-Reviewable Sentinel Events in the Military Health System

Part of my responsibility as principal staff assistant and advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD (P&R)) and the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense is to ensure high quality of programs and activities in the Military Health System. As part of that responsibility, identification and reporting of sentinel events (unexpected occurrences involving death or serious physical or psychological injury or risk thereof) is critical to our efforts to improve delivery of health care in our system. By increasing our knowledge and awareness of sentinel events, their causes, and strategies for their prevention, we can increase confidence of our beneficiary population, the public and the greater DoD community. Recent review of sentinel event reporting has indicated that notification to my office of such events has not always occurred or been timely.

I am requesting each Office of the Service Surgeons General report all Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)-reviewable sentinel events occurring in a military treatment facility (MTF) to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), TRICARE Management Activity, within 48 hours of the discovery of the event. Events that meet the definition of occurrences subject to review by the Joint Commission under the Sentinel Event Policy shall be reported. The report will include the event type or category, location of MTF, date of event discovery, brief summary of the event, date the Root Cause Analysis was chartered, and the Service point of contact. All reports will be de-identified as to specific patient or staff names.

Reporting may be accomplished by e-mail to the Chief Medical Officer, TRICARE Management Activity at cmo@tma.osd.mil. My point of contact for this policy is CAPT Deborah McKay, who may be reached at (703) 681-0064 x3640.

William Winkenwerder, Jr., MD

cc:

Assistant Secretary of the Army (M&RA)
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Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (M&RA)

HA POLICY: 04-018