

North Texas Mass Critical Care Guidelines Background Summary

In a mass disaster when medical resources may be overwhelmed, these guidelines best ensure survival for the most patients.

This is why a regional collaboration of physicians, hospitals, ethicists, clergy, legal professionals, public health experts, elected leaders, and others have joined together in the North Texas Mass Critical Care Task Force to create clinical guidelines for use by physicians, hospitals, first responders, and other healthcare professionals during an overwhelming disaster. The *Guidelines* have been shared with local and state health officials and elected leaders.

Four Key Reasons Why the *Guidelines* are Important:

1. **Maximizing Survivability** – The *Guideline's* primary focus is to save the most lives in the event of disaster.
2. **Fairness for patients** – Consistency by physicians and hospitals with regional and state guidelines makes sense. Patients need to trust that medical care will be provided fairly and consistently across North Texas and the state. The *Guidelines* help physicians and health care professionals deliver more consistent care.
3. **Best Practices in use of limited resources** – Other states and authoritative national organizations have adopted models of care to allocate limited medical resources to patients most likely to survive. These Guidelines are based on those models.
4. **Proactive Leadership** – Advance preparation for an overwhelming health crisis encourages best medical practices, thus increasing patient survival.

Why are these *Guidelines* needed?

Although the North Texas area maintains a robust healthcare system with tremendous capacity and capability, the sheer number of individuals that could be affected by a disaster could quickly overwhelm these resources.

What is the ethical foundation of the *Guidelines*?

The ethical foundation is that all patients will be served by healthcare professionals following the same treatment guidelines based solely upon their ability to benefit from treatment —not based on social status, ability to pay, or any other form of discrimination.

How do the *Guidelines* work?

The *Guidelines* contain a framework in which healthcare providers, hospitals, and other clinical settings can create their own set of decision-making tools. Because these are guidelines only, physicians must continue to use their medical judgment when caring for their patients.

When will the *Guidelines* be used, and who will make the decision to use them?

The *Guidelines* call for activation only upon declaration of a state of emergency by the governor of Texas.

Where will the *Guidelines* be used?

The North Texas *Guidelines* are intended to be used in Dallas, Tarrant, Denton, and Collin counties. This is based upon the healthcare systems, county health departments, and county medical societies that have approved the *Guidelines* and serve patients in this area.

For more information or questions about the draft *North Texas Mass Critical Care Guidelines*, contact Connie Webster at the Dallas County Medical Society at 214-948-3622 or at connie@dallas-cms.org.