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## **Community Referrals by Emergency Medical Services**

Toronto Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is the provider of ambulance and paramedical services for the City of Toronto. Toronto EMS paramedics respond to over 300,000 emergency calls and non emergency transfers a year. Paramedics typically work 12 hour shift, but with the frequent occurrence of hospital delays and end of shift emergency calls, most paramedics end up working past 12 hours.

When paramedics respond to a 911 call, they are often in the unique position of witnessing some of the more intimate and private circumstances of the patients living conditions. Difficulties with the management of medical conditions, mobility, or performing activities of daily living are just a few of issues that may not be apparent to family, friends, or the public. Patients can live with these issues for extended periods of time without receiving any assistance. Often EMS is the first health care provider to identify a need for services to help these patients.

Community Referrals by EMS (CREMS) allows the paramedic to make a referral to the Community Care Access Centre (CACC) on behalf of the patient with their consent. Some patients are not aware of the services that CCAC provides. Others do not recognize that they themselves are in need or could benefit from CCAC assistance. For many patients, having a paramedic offer them a CCAC referral is the first step to connecting them with much needed help.

In 2006, a pilot project was initiated within a specific area of the city to examine the impact that CREMS could have on the lives of people in need. The initial success of this pilot resulted in the expansion of the CREMS program in 2008 to all of Toronto EMS. In 2009, Toronto EMS staff submitted 965 CREMS.

As the health care system struggles to meet the increasing demands of an aging population, more people are finding it difficult to connect with the appropriate health care resources. CREMS has proven to be an effective way of connecting those in need with assistance to improve their quality of life.

Please consider the following when accepting a CREMS from a Toronto paramedic.

- The paramedic may only have one opportunity to make the CREMS.
- The paramedic is under constant time constraints: returning to available status to provide emergency service coverage, responding to 911 calls, and end of shift overtime.
- The paramedic may not have access to all the patient details.
- The paramedic is simply a concerned person making a referral; they are not involved with the patient beyond the scope of the 911 call.

Your assistance in receiving all the details relevant to the CREMS is essential to connecting the patient with CCAC. Thank you for helping these people in need.

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