

PRESS RELEASE

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**U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS ANNOUNCES BRIEFING ON
PATIENT DUMPING BY HOSPITALS: ENFORCEMENT OF THE EMERGENCY
MEDICAL TREATMENT ACT**

WASHINGTON, DC - The United States Commission on Civil Rights announces that it will hold a briefing to examine compliance with the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), a federal law that requires Medicare-participating hospitals to treat emergency medical conditions of any person regardless of capacity to pay, and makes unlawful the discharge of patients prior to stabilizing any medical condition. The purpose of EMTALA is to prevent hospitals, states and/or localities from prematurely discharging indigent people in need of emergency care and transporting them to other entities, a practice colloquially called “patient dumping.”

The briefing will take place on Friday, February 14, 2014 at 9:30 am ET at the Commission’s headquarters: 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 1150, Washington, DC 20425. Please note that the offices are accessed on F Street NW. Interested members of the public are invited to attend and no reservation is necessary.

Of concern to the Commission is the extent to which patients with a psychiatric disability are denied adequate care and whether there has been systemic neglect of this group. Experts at the briefing will present research on how many patients across the country may have been prematurely discharged; will discuss what policies are in place to detect potential violations of the law; will report on possible links between deficiencies in federal expenditures to states and prevalence of patient dumping; and will discuss whether hospital policies governed by the Act should be revised to ensure the protection of patients’ rights.

The Commission will hear from nine speakers in three panels. The government panel will be Marilyn Dahl, Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Eileen Hanrahan, Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Civil Rights; and Sandra Sands, Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Inspector General. The advocates/practitioners panel will be Staci Pratt, ACLU; Gina Greenwood, Baker Donelson; Hernan Vera, Public Counsel; and Susan Preston, Goodell, DeVries, Leech and Dann LLP. The scholars/academics panel will be Katharine Van Tassel, The University of Akron School of Law; and Richard Elliot, Mercer University School of Medicine and School of Law.

Written comments from the public will be accepted by email at publiccomments@usccr.gov until March 17, 2014 and will become part of the public record in their entirety. Deaf or hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign-language interpreter should contact Pam Dunston at (202) 376-8105 at least seven business days prior to the briefing.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin R. Castro and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney and Michael Yaki. Commission meetings and briefings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.