



Travis County STAR Flight



7800 Old Manor Road
Austin, TX 78724
www.starflightrescue.com

Dispatch 1-800-531-STAR
Administration (512) 854-6464
Fax (512) 854-6466

Travis County STAR Flight is the only local government Public Operations/Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) service in Texas which is fully integrated into the 911 system. Its primary mission is First Response for Travis County. To meet this mission, STAR Flight provides Emergency Medical Service, Hospital to Hospital transport, Search and Rescue, Fire suppression and Law Enforcement support. In addition to the aforementioned, STAR Flight has service agreements with local hospital systems to provide air transport for Medical Specialty teams.

STAR Flight's current 911 deployment model has not changed in approximately 15 years. However, STAR Flight's medical capabilities have changed dramatically to include advanced skills, equipment and treatment modalities that, when appropriately deployed, improve the outcome of our patients. Anecdotal evidence indicates consensus that STAR Flight is being underutilized due to an outdated deployment model and dated decision making algorithms by on scene first responders. This underutilization can significantly impact patient care and outcomes, strain the availability of ground transport resources and underserves the citizens of Travis County.

In October of 2018, a Joint Position Statement on appropriate utilization of aeromedical resources was released by the Air Medical Physician Association (AMPA), the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP), and the American Academy of Emergency Physicians (AAEP). The statement supported aeromedical utilization guidelines previously released by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Those guidelines identify three different set of criteria to ensure patient benefit from appropriate utilization of aeromedical resources. Those criteria include:

1. Meaningful reduction of total Out of Hospital (OOH) time for patients with time-sensitive medical conditions or traumatic injuries. OOH is measured from insult or injury to delivery of the patient to a definitive care or interventional facility.
2. Providing necessary specialized medical expertise or clinical capabilities to patients prior to initiating transport
3. Initiating assessment and care in difficult to access locations

Travis County STAR Flight conducted a utilization review for rescue operations inside Travis County, utilizing available data. It was determined that underutilization is occurring, resulting in longer than necessary OOH. As a result, and in a collaborative effort to better serve the citizens of Travis County and support our partner agencies' efforts to do the same, Travis County STAR Flight staff, Travis County Emergency Services, Austin-Travis County EMS (ATCEMS), ATCEMS Communications (MedComm), the Travis County Division of Clinical Performance and Education and the City of Austin Office of the Medical Director (COAOMD) sought to identify possible causes for the underutilization. Several contributing factors were identified including:

1. Poor communication of STAR Flight capabilities, flight times, billing practices, interagency training opportunities and historical referenced decision making
2. Outdated dispatch guidelines
3. Lack of collaborative medical direction guidelines



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Several independent efforts and corrective actions are underway to address the factors identified. One of those efforts is a collaborative medical direction guideline for utilization of Travis County STAR Flight. Emphasis has been made to not create an over triage or excessive utilization practice. That is not the intent or goal of the corrective actions being taken. Specific considerations taken for utilization include:

1. Overall aircraft performance and clinical capabilities available
2. Historical response times
3. Location of definitive/interventional care facilities
4. Topographical and population density changes throughout the region
5. Billing practices of private aeromedical providers outside of Travis County as compared to the Commissioner's Court directed billing practices of Travis County STAR Flight
6. Historical OOH time for specific call types identified as time-sensitive medical conditions or traumatic injuries