

24-hour Rule

1799.110. (a) In any action for damages involving a claim of negligence against a physician and surgeon arising out of emergency medical services provided in a general acute care hospital emergency department, the trier of fact shall consider, together with all other relevant matters, the circumstances constituting the emergency, as defined herein, and the degree of care and skill ordinarily exercised by reputable members of the physician and surgeon's profession in the same or similar locality, in like cases, and under similar emergency circumstances.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "emergency medical services" and "emergency medical care" means those medical services required for the immediate diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions which, if not immediately diagnosed and treated, could lead to serious physical or mental disability or death.

(c) In any action for damages involving a claim of negligence against a physician and surgeon providing emergency medical coverage for a general acute care hospital emergency department, the court shall admit expert medical testimony only from physicians and surgeons who have had substantial professional experience within the last five years while assigned to provide emergency medical coverage in a general acute care hospital emergency department. For purposes of this section, "substantial professional experience" shall be determined by the custom and practice of the manner in which emergency medical coverage is provided in general acute care hospital emergency departments in the same or similar localities where the alleged negligence occurred.

1799.111. (a) Subject to subdivision (b), a licensed general acute care hospital, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 1250, that is not a county-designated facility pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, a licensed acute psychiatric hospital, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 1250, that is not a county-designated facility pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, licensed professional staff of those hospitals, or any physician and surgeon, providing emergency medical services in any department of those hospitals to a person at the hospital shall not be civilly or criminally liable for detaining a person if all of the following conditions exist during the detention:

(1) The person cannot be safely released from the hospital because, in the opinion of the treating physician and surgeon, or a clinical psychologist with the medical staff privileges, clinical privileges, or professional responsibilities provided in Section 1316.5, the person, as a result of a mental disorder, presents a danger to himself or herself, or others, or is gravely disabled. For purposes of this paragraph, "gravely disabled" means an inability to provide for his or her basic personal needs for food, clothing, or shelter.

(2) The hospital staff, treating physician and surgeon, or appropriate licensed mental health professional, have made, and documented, repeated unsuccessful efforts to find appropriate mental health treatment for the person.

(A) Telephone calls or other contacts required pursuant to this paragraph shall commence at the earliest possible time when the treating physician and surgeon has determined the time at which the person will be medically stable for transfer.

(B) In no case shall the contacts required pursuant to this paragraph begin after the time when the person becomes medically stable for transfer.

(3) The person is not detained beyond 24 hours.

(4) There is probable cause for the detention.

(b) If the person is detained pursuant to subdivision (a) beyond eight hours, but less than 24 hours, both of the following additional conditions shall be met:

(1) A discharge or transfer for appropriate evaluation or treatment for the person has been delayed because of the need for continuous and ongoing care, observation, or treatment that the hospital is providing.

(2) In the opinion of the treating physician and surgeon, or a clinical psychologist with the medical staff privileges or professional responsibilities provided for in Section 1316.5, the person, as a result of a mental disorder, is still a danger to himself or herself, or others, or is gravely disabled, as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

(c) In addition to the immunities set forth in subdivision (a), a licensed general acute care hospital, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 1250 that is not a county-designated facility pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, a licensed acute psychiatric hospital as defined by subdivision (b) of Section 1250 that is not a county-designated facility pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, licensed professional staff of those hospitals, or any physician and surgeon, providing emergency medical services in any department of those hospitals to a person at the hospital shall not be civilly or criminally liable for the actions of a person detained up to 24 hours in those hospitals who is subject to detention pursuant to subdivision (a) after that person's release from the detention at the hospital, if all of the following conditions exist during the detention:

(1) The person has not been admitted to a licensed general acute care hospital or a licensed acute psychiatric hospital for evaluation and treatment pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(2) The release from the licensed general acute care hospital or the licensed acute psychiatric hospital is authorized by a physician and surgeon or a clinical psychologist with the medical staff privileges or professional responsibilities provided for in Section 1316.5, who determines, based on a face-to-face examination of the person detained, that the person does not present a danger to himself or herself or others and is not gravely disabled, as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (a). In order for this paragraph to apply to a clinical psychologist, the clinical psychologist shall have a collaborative treatment relationship with the physician and surgeon. The clinical psychologist may authorize the release of the person from the detention, but only after he or she has consulted with the physician and surgeon. In the event of a clinical or professional disagreement regarding the release of a person subject to the detention, the detention shall be maintained unless the hospital's medical director overrules the decision of the physician and surgeon opposing the release. Both the physician and surgeon and the clinical psychologist shall enter their findings, concerns, or objections in the person's medical record.

(d) Nothing in this section shall affect the responsibility of a general acute care hospital or an acute psychiatric hospital to comply with all state laws and regulations pertaining to the use of seclusion and restraint and psychiatric medications for psychiatric patients. Persons detained under this section shall retain their legal rights regarding consent for medical treatment.

(e) A person detained under this section shall be credited for the time detained, up to 24 hours, in the event he or she is placed on a subsequent 72-hour hold pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

(f) The amendments to this section made by the act adding this subdivision shall not be construed to limit any existing duties for psychotherapists contained in Section 43.92 of the Civil Code.