

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Deputy Secretary,  
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Bureau of Treatment, Prevention, and Intervention  
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## REMINDER TO ALERT EMERGENCY CONTACTS WHEN PATIENTS LEAVE AGAINST ADVICE

As drug and alcohol treatment providers are aware, patients who leave against medical advice (AMA) or against treatment advice (ATA), place their own health at risk. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found in 2014 – the most recent data available – that just over 25% of discharges were individuals who had dropped out of treatment.<sup>1</sup> The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) reminds treatment providers of the importance of minimizing the risks to patients leaving AMA or ATA by being sure to always implement the policies and procedures already in place.

Provided consent has not been revoked, treatment facilities should always notify a patient's emergency contact when a patient leaves AMA or ATA. It could be the difference between life and death.

Treatment providers should consider being more proactive by establishing and implementing additional policies and procedures to further minimize the risk to patients leaving AMA or ATA, including:

- having multiple emergency contacts,
- supplying departing patients with other community resources, and
- following up with patients after departure.

Questions regarding this Information Bulletin can be directed to Jodi Skiles, Director for Bureau of Treatment, Prevention, and Intervention at (717) 736-7454 or [joskiles@pa.gov](mailto:joskiles@pa.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> "Treatment Episode Data Set: Discharges (TEDS-D)." Treatment Episode Data Set: Discharges (TEDS-D) | SAMHDA, [www.datafiles.samhsa.gov/study-series/treatment-episode-data-set-discharges-teds-d-nid13520](http://www.datafiles.samhsa.gov/study-series/treatment-episode-data-set-discharges-teds-d-nid13520).