



Title "They have been drinking."	Date 02/13/2019
CDE Number M-1901002	CDE Credit Hours .5 HRS

What protocol is used when the reporting party only says, "They had too much to drink and need to go to the hospital?" To this point, we have handled this under Protocol 23 to address the scene safety concerns that commonly accompany intoxicated patients. However, in the visually impaired environment that we work in, how can we tell if they truly are having an alcohol overdose or having another medical emergency? Notice that alcohol is not addressed on any of the Protocols to include the list of substances on Protocol 23: Overdose/Poisoning.

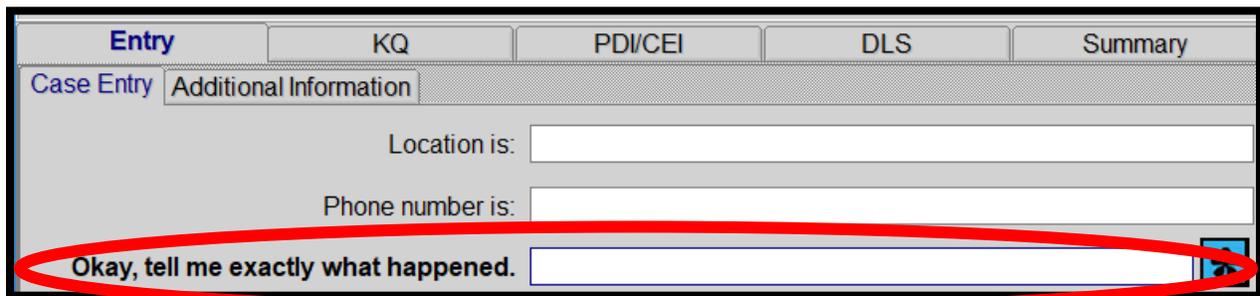
- Antidepressant (tricyclic):
- Cocaine (or derivative)
- Methamphetamine
- Acid
- Alkali (lye)
- Medications:
- Poison:
- Narcotics (heroin, morphine, methadone, OxyContin, e
- Plant:
- Other (unlisted):
- Unknown

Dr. Clawson says:

"We have specifically avoided having any 'alcohol' pigeonholes in the MPDS since these would be heavily abused by calltakers when dealing with patients reported to be 'drunk'. While true drunks are the bane of public safety, the ability to sort out who is only drunk vs. drunk with medical problems, drunk with diabetes, drunk with internal injuries, drunk with subdural hematomas, drunk with hemophilia is difficult for field responders and even ER personal, much less dispatch."



Instead, we will address the symptom. If they have not provided any other information that could help us to select a Chief Complaint, a great clarifying question to ask is, "What kind of symptoms is he/she having?" For example, if they are drunk and in and out of consciousness, then we will process the call on Protocol 31: Unconscious/Fainting. We do not want to move past, "Okay, tell me exactly what happened," until there is a clear pathway in mind. If nothing fits, then this will be a "sick person" call.

A screenshot of a dispatch software interface. The interface has a top navigation bar with tabs labeled "Entry", "KQ", "PDI/CEI", "DLS", and "Summary". Below this, there are two sub-tabs: "Case Entry" and "Additional Information". The "Additional Information" tab is active. The form contains several input fields: "Location is:", "Phone number is:", and a larger text area. The text "Okay, tell me exactly what happened." is entered into the larger text area and is circled in red. There is a small blue icon in the bottom right corner of the text area.

To wrap up this concept, Brett Patterson from the International Academy of Emergency Dispatch states it best:

"In reality, the complaint of 'drunk person' is essentially a diagnosis made by Chief Complaint alone. The practice of diagnosis by complaint alone, especially in the non-visual, hands off environment of dispatch, is inherently dangerous in all but a few very exceptional and reliable circumstances. When this is done, we rely exclusively on the opinion of an untrained caller which, in the case of the intoxicated person, is often quite biased."



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