

Frequently Asked Questions

Life or Limb Policy Supplemental Resource

As a referring physician, how do I know if my patient meets Life or Limb criteria?

Use of clinical judgment based on Policy definitions is imperative (i.e., are the care requirements of your patient “treatable, time-sensitive, and critical”?). CritiCall also provides consultation guidelines for some service areas (see [Consultation Guidelines](#)). Under the Life or Limb Policy, access to treatment is required within a best effort window of 4 hours.

The Life or Limb pathway is not intended to expedite specialist or transport access.

My patient needs emergent care but is does not meet Life of Limb criteria, who do I contact for support?

Explore if your organization has established referral pathways (e.g., you are a multi-site organization with across-site supports, regional memorandums of understanding) that would meet your patient’s care requirements. If there are none, CritiCall can support case facilitation for non-Life or Limb urgent care (i.e., access to care is required within 24 hours). You can contact CritiCall for an urgent (not Life or Limb) consultation.

What happens if my patient is confirmed Life or Limb, but their transfer will take longer than 4-hours?

There are instances where the 4-hour target for access to treatment cannot reasonably be met, for example in the North regions where travel distances to tertiary care centres are long, or when inclement weather delays travel. In cases like these, an adjustment of logistics should occur.

Facilitated by CritiCall, the referring physician and medical transport providers should collaborate to identify the most efficient and safe route of travel [e.g., identifying alternate transport options including determining rendezvous locations, airport pickups, and transport mode (land or air)].

The referring physician should provide the required clinical care; the consulting physician should provide guidance to stabilize the patient. The transfer should occur as soon as it is safe to do so.

What if a consulting physician (or their hospital) refuses a Life or Limb patient because they do not have a bed available?

When a case is confirmed Life or Limb, persons are transferred to the receiving hospital on a priority and no-refusal basis. The absence of hospital beds, including intensive care unit beds and post-procedural beds, is not a consideration. Hospitals are expected to initiate hospital surge protocol if required, in order to receive persons on a priority basis.

Hospital refusal on the basis of capacity is a policy deviation and will be escalated to the CritiCall Medical Director on-call for their support. Hospital administrative lead on-call may be contacted to

support the acceptance. These cases will be tracked for quality improvement purposes. CritiCall may support redirection to the next closest, most appropriate hospital if needed.

What if my hospital has already implemented surge plans and they have indicated they cannot safely accommodate another patient?

Hospitals are expected to notify their Ontario Health Regional leadership and CritiCall Ontario when experiencing any impact in their ability to participate in the responsibilities outlined in the Policy. In the absence of this communication, hospitals cannot refuse a confirmed Life or Limb case.

As a referring physician, what should I do if there is a delay, disagreement, or other uncertainty during medical consultation process?

When required, those participating in a Life or Limb case facilitation (e.g., the referring physician) can request the CritiCall Call Agent to escalate in real time to the CritiCall Medical Director on-call. Medical Directors at CritiCall are available to support timely resolution of the case.

How is performance tracked?

Ontario Health program of critical care and Ontario Health Regional Teams will monitor performance using aggregated data on case facilitation collected through CritiCall, by review of cases that were escalated to the CritiCall Medical Director, and by review of feedback provided directly to CritiCall via their client relations team. The purpose of this monitoring is to inform local, regional and provincial quality improvement.

Additional Resources

- The Ontario Life or Limb Policy is available on the Ministry of Health [website](#).
- CritiCall has several resources available on their website to support hospitals and physicians (see [Urgent and Emergent Support](#) page).
- Critical Care Services Ontario (CCSO) has additional resources available on their website to support hospitals and physicians (see [Life or Limb resource](#) page).

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health and Critical Care Services Ontario, the [Ontario Life or Limb Policy](#) was updated and released in October 2025. The Policy was updated with the guidance of a leadership team that included the Ontario Health provincial program of critical care, CorHealth, Ontario Health Regions, Critical Care Services Ontario, CritiCall Ontario, and Ornge, as well as feedback received from over 30 partner engagement sessions with health system providers, clinicians, and patient and family advisors from each region of the province. The updated Policy aims to ensure equitable access to Life or Limb care for every person in Ontario.

For more information, contact lifeorlimb@criticall.org