

SHOULD EMS BE AN “ESSENTIAL SERVICE?”



Primary Problems

1. Shortage of Prehospital EMS Professionals

Nearly all EMS agencies in Colorado are struggling to recruit and retain EMS clinicians – especially paramedics.

- Robbing Peter to pay Paul, many “better-funded agencies” are taking clinicians away from “poorer-funded agencies.” Especially harms rural areas.
- There are fewer volunteers in rural areas to staff ambulances.
- Low pay and poor benefits are leading causes of recruitment and retention efforts. Demands for higher wages combined with flat revenues from payers worsen recruitment and retention efforts!

2. Funding Shortfalls

- Recent random survey suggests the **cost of uncompensated EMS care** could exceed \$470 Million!
- Emergency medical services providers are funded largely through fees for service.
- Unlike most medical professionals, EMS professionals are not able to pick and choose their patients.
- **EMS agencies are paid only for transporting patients, not for the care they provide: Treatment in Place (TIP) – EMS services provided without transport are not paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, and commercial payers.**
- EMS readiness costs - 20% are direct transport costs, and 80% are readiness costs.
- Higher costs and supply chain shortages worsen financial sustainability.
- The consequence of the status quo is a gap in service that jeopardizes public safety!

Primary takeaways

- EMS is a critical component of public health and safety as it **must be provided to all regardless of the nature of the call, ability to pay, day of the week, or time of day!**
- EMS can't respond if it isn't ready to respond.
- **EMS should be designated as an Essential Service and be adequately funded by payers local, state, and federal funding sources!**

Emergency Medical Services Association of Colorado

