

EMS IN CRISIS

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August 26, 2022

Interim Joint Committee on Local Government

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PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Kentucky as well as states across the nation are experiencing a shortage of appropriately trained and credentialed Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics.
- Lack of EMS personnel availability on ground ambulances place the health and safety of the citizens of Kentucky at risk, also reducing the capacity of ground ambulance availability for interfacility transfers.
- A recent study by the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services shows that while over 14,500 EMS professionals are certified/licensed in Kentucky, only approximately 50% of these individuals are employed by a ground ambulance service in Kentucky.

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STUDIES

- In 2018, KBEMS in collaboration with the KBEMS Education Committee and the Kentucky Association of Fire Chief's formed a Paramedic accreditation Task Force to allow for the flow of information across Paramedic educational programs.
- One of the work products of this Task Force was to survey certified EMT's in Kentucky, and the identify perceived barriers to completing Paramedic education. The top five barriers identified were:
 - Work & School Schedules Conflict (22%)
 - No Desire to Become a Paramedic (18%)
 - Time Commitment/Length of Service (17%)
 - Little Increase/Incentive Pay (14%); &
 - Lack of Financial Aid Availability (12%)

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A SURVEY OF PROFESSIONALS LEAVING THE PROFESSION

- To better understand provider turnover and conduct provider retention efforts, the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services began studying EMS attrition in 2016.
- The top five reasons for allowing an EMS license/certification to expire in 2016* were:
 - Retirement (26%)
 - Low Salary and/or Poor Benefits Package (24%)
 - Relocated (16%)
 - External Factors: Not My Choice to Leave EMS (10%); and
 - Poor Management and/or Hostile Workplace (10%).

Q: What would keep you in EMS?

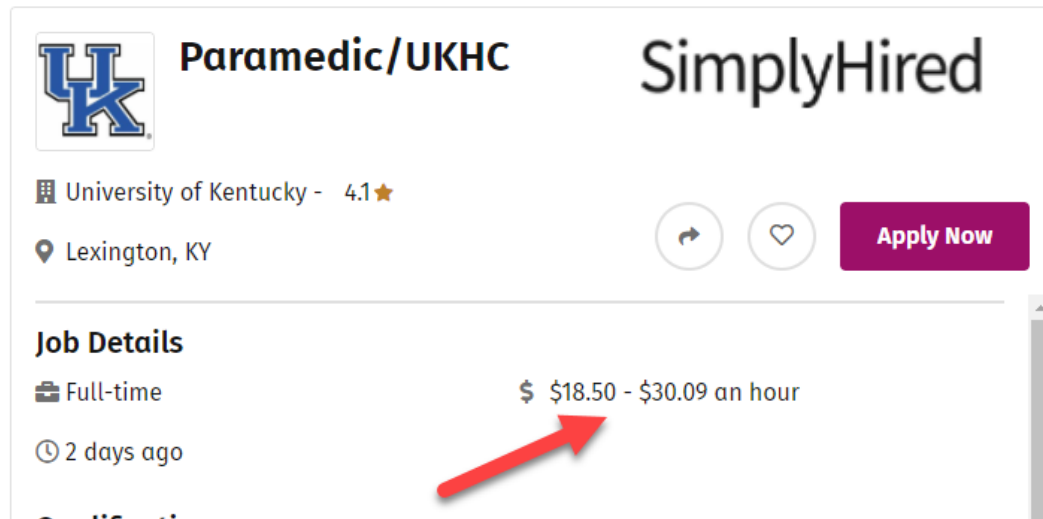
Better Education	12	3%
Better Schedules	32	8%
Higher Pay	283	68%
Less Work Load	37	9%
More Benefit Time	19	5%
Opportunities for Advancement	30	7%

* Attrition Surveys for 2016, 2017, and 2018 are included in your packets.



COMPETITION FOR EMS PROFESSIONALS

- Ground ambulance services operated in both the public and private sector are having significant difficulty competing with hospitals for Paramedics. Hospitals are offering significant sign-on bonuses and hazard pay that local governments simply cannot afford.



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ACTION ITEMS

- House Bill 8 was enacted by the General Assembly in 2018. This bill bolsters Kentucky Medicaid Ground Ambulance reimbursement by generating an additional \$43 Million each year for Kentucky Ground Ambulance Services.
 - These dollars should be earmarked by local governments to enhance EMS salaries, benefits, and student loan forgiveness programs.
- Many younger EMS candidates are interested in non-traditional schedules. Agencies and local governments should evaluate the continued use of 24-Hour Shifts for crew safety and staff retention.
- Evaluate upward mobility options for EMS staff. Many rural and even suburban agencies do not have large administrative organizations, and opportunities for advancement are limited or non-existent.
- Support of federal/state student loan forgiveness programs for Emergency Medical Services personnel.

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THREATS

- A 2019 Kentucky EMS salary survey produced the following summary results for starting EMS salaries in Kentucky:

Agency Provider Entry-Level PayScale			
Average Entry-Level Pay for All KY Agencies			
	EMT	AEMT	Paramedic
Average Entry Level Pay	\$11.88	\$13.30	\$15.62

- Consistent themes in EMS across the nation is that they will no longer do the work for the compensation packages available. Local governments must find revenue streams to significantly enhance EMS salary and benefit packages to remain competitive.



ADDITIONAL AREAS FOR ACTION

- Childcare assistance for single parents working 24-hour shifts.
- EMS Mental Health Services
- Wellness initiatives
- Alternative Retirement Plans- CERS Hazardous/Non-hazardous plans are no longer an effective recruitment or retention tool.
- Evaluation of alternate accreditation programs for EMS educational programs.
- Educational and Financial incentives for continued work in the Ground Ambulance sector.

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QUESTIONS?

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