

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TASK FORCE

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the 2022 Interim

September 20, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 3rd meeting of the Emergency Medical Services Task Force was held on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, at 3:00 PM, in Room 171 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Ken Fleming, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator David P. Givens, Co-Chair; Representative Ken Fleming, Co-Chair; Senator Donald Douglas; Representatives Mark Hart and Lisa Willner.

Guests: Dr. Sheila Schuster, Ph.D., Executive Director, Kentucky Mental Health Coalition; Jason Wells, Fire Chief, Lexington Fire Department; Marc Bramlage, Battalion Chief, Office of EMS, Lexington Fire Department; Dr. Joe Middleton, DNP, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, Barren-Metcalf EMS; Shawn Estes, Assistant Director and Chief Financial Officer, Barren-Metcalf EMS; Lisa Lee, Commissioner, Department for Medicaid Services; and Steve Bechtel, Chief Financial Officer, Department for Medicaid Services.

LRC Staff: DeeAnn Wenk and Logan Schaaf.

On a motion and second, the August meeting minutes were approved.

EMS and Mental Health

Dr. Sheila Schuster, Ph.D., Executive Director of the Kentucky Mental Health Coalition, discussed problems relating to EMS transportation for patients with mental health issues. Dr. Schuster recommended increased crisis training for EMS personnel, reduction of stigma surrounding patients experiencing mental health issues, and the examination of administrative regulations that may be allowing EMS providers to deny transportation to patients with mental health concerns.

Responding to a question from Representative Fleming, Dr. Schuster said that she has heard of many instances of refusal of transportation for patients with mental health issues.

Responding to a question from Representative Hart, Dr. Schuster said that she would search for data on the refusal of transportation by private and public EMS providers.

Responding to questions from Senator Douglas, Dr. Schuster said that the most common instance of transportation refusal is facility to facility. She also discussed the criteria for an involuntary commitment, which may be seen more frequently when a patient is violent.

Responding to a question from Representative Willner, Dr. Schuster said that cases of transportation refusal usually do not happen during an emergency, defined as a life-threatening situation, and would be more likely during a non-emergency.

Eastern State and Lexington EMS

Jason Wells, Fire Chief, Lexington Fire Department (LFD), and Marc Bramlage, Battalion Chief, Office of EMS, Lexington Fire Department, spoke to the committee about their patient transport pilot program. The Lexington Fire Department is the only fire department in Fayette County. They respond to approximately 50,000 calls for service annually.

In 2021, a program was launched for the LFD to transport patients directly to Eastern State Hospital. The goals of this program include ensuring patients who do not require acute emergency medical services are placed in the most appropriate, cost effective level of care, reducing unnecessary readmissions for patients, and improving patient outcomes. The Behavioral Health Transport Advisory Committee communicates with LFD and Eastern State Hospital regularly to adjust the program as needed.

Potential obstacles to the program include the misunderstanding of the program by providers, unfamiliarity with the concept of patient destination choice, lack of patient familiarity with the system, and the stigma of being transported to a mental health facility.

Responding to questions from Representative Fleming, Chief Wells and Mr. Bramlage detailed the types of calls LFD has responded to under the pilot program, from substance abuse issues to manic episodes.

Responding to questions from Senator Givens, Mr. Bramlage explained the process of data collection and classification. Chief Wells said that the LFD does not refuse transportation to any patient.

Responding to a question from Representative Hart, Chief Wells expressed his hope that the pilot program would serve as a model for other regions in Kentucky.

Responding to questions from Representative Fleming, Mr. Bramlage discussed efforts to reduce rehospitalization. Chief Wells emphasized the importance of the amount of resources available to the LFD.

Regional Consolidation of EMS

Dr. Joe Middleton, DNP, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of Barren-Metcalf EMS, and Shawn Estes, Assistant Director and Chief Financial Officer of Barren-Metcalf EMS, discussed the Barren-Metcalf County EMS partnership model. The program has been active for 48 years. Barren and Metcalf counties share costs, share vehicles, and are more effectively able to provide services.

Co-chairs Fleming and Givens praised the work of Barren-Metcalf EMS and emphasized its potential as a model for other regions.

Medicaid Ambulance Reimbursement

Lisa Lee, Commissioner of the Department for Medicaid Services, and Steve Bechtel, Chief Financial Officer of the Department for Medicaid Services, discussed Medicaid coverage for ambulance services. They detailed the rates of reimbursement depending on the emergency or non-emergency status of the call and the level of life support (basic or advanced). They explained the Managed Care Directed Payment Program, which allows states with managed care programs to make enhanced payments to providers to advance the goals of the Medicaid program. They highlighted the Ambulance Provider Assessment Program (APAP), implemented in 2021. It authorizes an enhanced payment program for ground ambulance services. The goals of the program are to promote access to high quality care by reducing ambulance response times and to increase the number of certified EMS practitioners.

Responding to questions from Senator Givens, Commissioner Lee said that allowing treatment in place to be covered by Medicaid would require approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and an 1115 waiver, which she said they would be open to pursuing.

With no further business before the Task Force, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM. The next meeting of the Emergency Medical Services Task Force will be Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 3:00 PM in Annex Room 171.