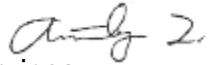




EMS Information Bulletin

TO: Pennsylvania EMS Agencies
Regional EMS Councils

FROM: Anthony Martin 
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
PA Department of Health
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DATE: May 6, 2025

SUBJECT: County-level or broader level EMS response plan

This EMSIB rescinds EMSIB 2017-01 dated February 14, 2017

Reference: County-level or Broader Level Plan* - 28 Pa. Code § 1027.6 (3) (Statewide EMS response plan)

Agencies that are unable to meet the requirement of providing services twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week may participate in a county-level or broader-level response plan approved by the Department.

Under an approved county-level or broader-level EMS response plan, the participating EMS agencies may not be required to provide EMS twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week. The plan must include the process to ensure EMS will be available twenty-four hours (24) a day, seven (7) days per week without delay, to provide patient care for the entire county. The agency or agencies that are providing coverage must be at the same or higher level of service as the agency that is out of service.

Regional EMS councils will work with EMS agencies, Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and other municipal leaders to facilitate the creation and implementation of the plan. The plan must ensure coverage twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week within the county to meet statutory and regulatory requirements for the Department to approve the plan.

What a county-level or broader-level response plan is not:

1. The county's dispatch process.
2. A mutual aid plan. A mutual aid plan is an agreement in place between neighboring agencies to provide assistance when needed.

3. A dual dispatch plan. Dual dispatching (dispatching two separate agencies at one time to ensure one will respond) may be part of the county's dispatch plan/process but does not take the place of a licensed EMS agency meeting minimum staffing requirements.
4. A replacement for an agency to not staff at the highest licensed level as required in §1027.31 (7). An exception to this had been approved previously permitting each agency to be staffed at their highest licensed level at one location twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days per week.
5. The county's PSAP responsibility to continually track each agency's changing schedules. Pre-planning is a pro-active approach to ensure coverage in areas in which EMS agencies are unable to staff twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week. This type of plan does not replace mutual aid agreements or the county PSAP dispatch plan. Its purpose is not to cover for last minute mechanical failures or call-offs.

Process for developing a county-level or broader response plan:

1. Planning begins locally with the involvement of EMS agencies, regional EMS Councils, county PSAPs, and other municipal leaders.
 - Not all agencies in the county need to participate in the plan, however the opportunity should be provided to all licensed agencies in the county to have the choice to participate.
 - Plan should include all levels of service provided by EMS.
 - All participating agencies must consent by signing the agreement.
 - Agencies that choose not to participate will be required to provide twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week coverage at the highest level of service in which they are licensed.
2. Primary goal of plan should be to ensure 95% of calls for service are answered by first agency dispatched, to provide appropriate level of patient care.
 - Agencies that have reported out-of-service as required §1027.3(g)(1) are not penalized for not responding. Proof of reporting out of service is required by §1027.3(4) and/or needs to be included as part of the approved county-level or broader response plan for QA/QI.
 - An agency that has reported out-of-service can have a courtesy page, if that is the agreement of the plan and permissible by the PSAP's policy. However, the agency that is in-service shall be dispatched immediately to not delay patient care.
3. Establish a process that ensures coverage when an agency is unable to staff.
 - This is coordinated by the agency that will be out of service and the covering agency/agencies.

- This must be arranged as far in advance as possible but no less than twelve (12) hours in advance to avoid delay in patient care.
 - The PSAP shall be notified in a manner and timeframe as required by the PSAP.
 - The municipality(ies) must be provided with an out of service report no less than once per month.
- 4. Establish collaborative scheduling in advance to provide twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week coverage to ensure there are no gaps in service and to ensure the appropriate available agency is dispatched.
 - Example
 - Agency A may not be able to provide daytime coverage
 - Agency B may not be able to provide nighttime coverage
 - Agency A and Agency B collaborate to ensure there is no gap in service
 - The collaborative scheduling is part of the plan, so the PSAP is aware of which agency is staffed to not delay patient care.
- 5. Plan can include system status management (if applicable)
 - Process of efficiently managing and coordinating the location, availability and readiness of ambulances in a given area to ensure quick response.
 - Deploy units based upon location and historic call volume
- 6. Plan can include county PSAP dispatch process, but the plan is more than just mutual aid and/or dispatching next agency. It involves pre-planning to ensure time is not lost on dispatching agencies that are out-of-service or inadequately staffed.
- 7. Established mutual aid agreements can be a part of plan but are not the entire plan.
- 8. Plan can only reduce hours/days for an agency to be in-service, not reduce level of service provided. Agency providing coverage for another agency must be licensed at and provide the same level of service.
- 9. There must be a minimum of one plan administrator to oversee the plan.
- 10. Identify a quality improvement process to ensure the overall plan meets or exceeds defined standards
 - Needs to include reporting process for all plan participants
 - Needs to include review process of reports received
 - Needs to include process to follow for non-compliant agencies
 - Non-compliance needs to be reported immediately to the Bureau of EMS by the plan administrator
- 11. Any number of licensed EMS agencies can participate in the plan, but the plan needs to ensure EMS coverage twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days per week for the entire county.
 - Example
 - There are six (6) agencies in the county.

- There are four (4) agencies that staff twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week.
 - The two (2) agencies that are unable to staff twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week have an agreement with other agencies to ensure twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week coverage for their designated coverage area.
 - The four (4) agencies that staff twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week and the agreement between the remaining agencies would ensure twenty-four (24) hours-a-day, seven (7) days a week coverage for the entire county and would meet the requirements for an approved plan.
12. Plan needs to be reviewed every twelve (12) months to ensure functionality and confirm agency's continued participation.
 - Any edits or updates to the plan, must be submitted to the Bureau for approval
 - Regional EMS councils are available to help with this review and will provide a reminder to the plan administrator three (3) months prior to the plan review date.
 13. Identify terms for agencies to be able to withdraw from the plan.
 14. Plan needs to include signatures from all agencies that are opting out of participation or documentation included that an agency opting out refused to sign.
 15. Final approved plan needs to have the Bureau of EMS, System Operations Manager's signature and date indicating approval of plan.
 16. The Bureau reserves the right at any time to revoke approval to a plan that is not in compliance.

Implementation Process:

All existing approved county-level or broader-level plans must be reviewed for compliance with the process outlined above within twelve (12) months of the date of this EMSIB. Any plans not submitted for review within twelve (12) months of this date will be considered nullified and notification will be made to all participating agencies.

Please direct any questions regarding this to your regional EMS council.