



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Health Services

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Tony Evers, Governor  
Andrea Palm, Secretary-designee

October 27, 2020

Jeff Renk  
Senate Chief Clerk  
Room B20 Southeast, State Capitol  
Madison, WI 53702

Patrick E. Fuller  
Assembly Chief Clerk  
17 West Main Street, Room 401  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mr. Renk and Mr. Fuller:

I am pleased to submit to the Legislature the 2020-21 Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Plan as required by Wis. Stat. § 256.08. The plan was prepared by the Division of Public Health, Emergency Medical Services Section.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrea Palm", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrea Palm  
Secretary-designee



2020–2021

# **WISCONSIN EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN**

Department of Health Services  
Office of Preparedness and Emergency Health Care  
EMS Section  
P-00576 (06/2020)

## **Executive Summary**

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Section is part of the Department of Health Services (DHS), Division of Public Health, Office of Preparedness and Emergency Health Care (OPEHC). This report presents significant accomplishments of the EMS Section in the 2018-2019 biennium, as well as the intended workflow for the 2020-2021 biennium as required by Wis. Stat. § 256.08.

## **Introduction**

The EMS Section oversees the state's EMS program as directed by Wis. Stat. ch. 256 and Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110. With input from various stakeholder groups and the governor-appointed EMS Board, the section carried out its statutory and regulatory activities through a staff of 8: one section chief, three regional coordinators, one licensing coordinator, one research analyst-senior, one operations program associate, one grantee (state medical director), and during 2019, a part-time financial specialist-senior and two limited term employees funded by the federal opioid grant. In addition, the state ambulance inspector, housed within the Department of Transportation, performs all vehicle inspections and ensures compliance with Wis. Admin. Code ch. Trans. 309.

The first half of the biennium was a license renewal cycle for more than 18,000 EMS practitioners and over 800 services in the state. At the same time, work was started on a number of legislative initiatives, including 2017 Act 66 (community EMS) and 2017 Act 97 (flexible staffing for rural services). A number of recently enacted legislative acts also necessitated changes to Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 and this administrative rule revision process began in 2019.

Work during the 2020-2021 biennium will again be focused on completing a license renewal cycle between January and September 2020, completing the revision of Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110, working with stakeholder groups and the EMS Board to address the issue of EMS recruitment and retention, leveraging data from the Wisconsin Ambulance Run Data System (WARDS) to make data and evidence-based decisions regarding the statewide EMS system and patient care including the development and implementation of statewide protocols, rolling out revised national education standards, and improving the user-friendliness of the e-licensing system.

## **Accomplishments of the 2018-2019 Biennium**

2018-2019 was a biennium of many challenges for the EMS Section. There was significant turnover in staff for OPEHC, including the office director in the third quarter of 2017, the EMS section chief in January 2018, the operations program associate in April 2018, the communications coordinator in March 2019, a regional coordinator in July 2019, and the data manager in November 2019. A new section chief, regional coordinator, and operations program associate joined the section in 2018 and a part-time financial specialist was added in 2019 to handle the telephonic-assisted CPR program created by 2017 Act 296. As the biennium came to a close, hiring was in progress for the vacant regional coordinator and data manager (now research analyst-senior) positions. Filling available staff vacancies was and is key to accomplishing the work of the EMS Section.

The accomplishments of the section can be placed into one of three categories: education, licensing, or operations.

## **Education**

- **Training Centers:** We expanded the network of approved training centers to include those approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Prehospital Continuing Education (CAPCE), which includes a number of out-of-state training centers that offer training to Wisconsin services. In addition, we partnered with both Minnesota and Michigan for initial and continuing education opportunities for Wisconsin practitioners.
- **Online Refresher Training Programs:** We expanded the list of approved online refresher training programs, allowing practitioners a wider variety of choices when selecting a refresher program for re-certification or license renewal.
- **Partnership with the Coverdell Stroke Program:** In partnership with the Coverdell Stroke program, an online stroke continuing education program, was created for EMS practitioners and made available at no cost via WI-Train.
- **Partnership with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS):** We continue to strengthen our relationship with WTCS. In February 2019, the EMS Section and WTCS hosted an EMS instructor meeting in collaboration with the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT). NREMT staff assisted in presenting a session on how cognitive exams are written.
- **Sex Trafficking:** The EMS Section hosted a sex trafficking workshop in October 2019 that educated attendees on how to spot potential victims and unusual activity involving sex trafficking.
- **Training Officer Training Program:** The EMS Section and WTCS created a “train the trainer” program for service training officers and provided a copy of the National Association of EMS Educators training officer book to each licensed service in the state. The training program is offered at no cost and the books were provided through grant funding.
- **Accreditation Site Visits:** EMS Section staff participated in 12 site visits as part of the Committee on Accreditation of the EMS Professions’ (CoAEMSP) accreditation process for training programs.
- **NREMT:** EMS Section staff worked collaboratively with NREMT staff to transition psychomotor testing in Wisconsin to scenario-based testing. In addition, Wisconsin is a pilot state for the updated NREMT cognitive exam (all levels). Four new NREMT examiners at the emergency medical technician (EMT) level have been appointed. EMS Section staff continue to work with NREMT staff on availability of testing centers and class testing.
- **The Standards and Procedures of Practical Skills Manual:** A committee of educators and subject matter experts convened in 2019 to update the current manual.
- **Educational Portfolio:** EMS Section staff worked with WTCS staff to define clinical competencies for emergency medical responder (EMR) and EMT levels in the educational portfolio process.

## **Licensing**

- **Re-licensing:** 2018 was a license renewal cycle for over 18,000 EMRs and EMS practitioners at the EMT, advanced emergency medical technician (AEMT), emergency medical technician-intermediate, and paramedic levels. More than 830 services were also re-licensed during this cycle, which ended on June 30, 2018. Following completion of the license renewal cycle, a report on the EMS workforce entitled “2017-2018 Wisconsin Workplace Survey” was developed and published by the EMS Section.

- ImageTrend Upgrades: EMS Section staff traveled to ImageTrend (an e-licensing and e-patient care reporting vendor) to work on license management system (LMS) updates and enhancements. As with any software program, there are routine updates and upgrades needed in order to maintain the system appropriately. A substantial upgrade to the entire platform occurred early in 2019, the first such upgrade in more than 10 years. The upgrade also assisted in identifying problem areas in the system. These were addressed with ImageTrend, and opportunities for improvement were identified for future work.
- Initial License Application: The initial license application in the e-licensing system was updated. NREMT certification data now connects directly to e-licensing, allowing a more seamless application process.
- Criminal History Review: The criminal history review process for initial applicants and renewal applicants was re-aligned to follow current Wisconsin statute and administrative rules.

## Operations

- Implementation of Legislation
  - 2017 Act 66 – Community EMS: A working group was formed to address the implementation of community EMS and, at the conclusion of their work, the working group identified a curriculum for community EMS and made recommendations on medical direction for community EMS programs. The working group also reviewed and provided input on the drafting of Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 pertaining to community EMS.
  - 2017 Act 97 – Flexible Staffing: This legislation allows rural ambulance services, with the approval of their medical director, to utilize flexible staffing to a higher level of care when those licensed practitioners are available. By the end of 2019, 28 services were utilizing flexible staffing—9 to the AEMT level and 19 to the paramedic level.
  - 2017 Act 296 – Telecommunicator-assisted CPR: A 0.5 FTE position was filled and a mini-grant program developed for the SFY 2019 state appropriation on this project. The purpose of the mini-grant program was to distribute funds to city, county, or regional emergency 911 communications centers and/or public safety answering points to implement and improve telecommunicator-assisted CPR programs. Grant requests included providing training, reference materials, and disposable and durable training aids. A working group was formed to bring together leaders from stakeholder groups to collaborate with the department on developing the grant program to maximize funding impact. Awards from the \$250,000 state appropriation were made to 33 agencies for training, continuing education, training supplies and equipment.
  - 2017 Act 350 – Licensure Period: Beginning with licenses issued or renewed in 2020, the licensure period moves from two years to three years. The change was made in the e-licensing system in preparation for the renewal cycle to begin in January 2020. With the addition of the third year to licensure, the issue of continuing education hours was tasked to the EMS Board’s Training and Education Committee. At the end of 2019, the committee’s recommendation on hours was in review by the EMS Section.
- Funding Assistance Program (FAP): Under Wis. Stat. § 256.12(4), the department distributes the \$1,960,000 state appropriation each year to ambulance service providers that are: a public agency; a volunteer fire department; or a nonprofit corporation for ambulance service vehicles, or vehicle equipment, or EMS supplies or equipment, or emergency medical training for personnel. Eligible agencies submit an application to DHS and then the state appropriation is divided up among the applicant agencies utilizing a

formula originating in statute and established by the EMS Board under Wis. Stat. Ch. 256.04(7). In 2018, 326 agencies received funding and 308 agencies received funding in 2019. In 2019, the FAP application process was refined and the application and expense report was made electronic within the e-licensing system.

- Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 Revision: Following several recent legislative changes, the need for revision of Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 was identified. In concert with the DHS Office of Legal Counsel and the administrative rules manager, a statement of scope was developed and approved by the DHS Secretary on April 16, 2019. The DHS 110 Revision Working Group was composed of the EMS Board plus one additional member. The working group held three meetings in June, July, and September 2019. The draft proposed rule order was submitted to the Office of Legal Counsel in November 2019 and approved to move forward for economic impact analysis on December 30, 2019.
- Statewide EMS Communications Plan: The Wisconsin Statewide EMS Communications Plan was reviewed and revised in March 2019 to include recent changes to the system and terminology.
- Data: WARDS has been the state's repository for electronic patient care reports since 2005. A common concern heard from service directors, medical directors, and field practitioners is that they enter data into the system but do not see how the data is used. Through collaborative efforts of the OPEHC team, there were three data reports generated in 2019: Cardiac Arrest Ambulance Runs (CY 2018), Pre-Hospital Hemorrhage Control: Emerging Trends (CY 2018), and Pediatric Ambulance Runs: Facts and Trends (CY 2018). These reports were shared with the EMS Board as well as with stakeholder groups. Additionally, in 2019 Wisconsin became the 19<sup>th</sup> state to join the BioSpatial data visualization platform where WARDS data is uploaded in real-time and then used to generate visual dashboards that assist service directors and medical directors in making decisions regarding operations and telling their data story. The initial data sharing agreement provided for data beginning with March 2018 forward to be uploaded to the platform. The section did a soft roll-out to the EMS Board and sent invitations out to all service directors to participate in another soft roll-out of the platform. Nearly 100 services responded and now have access to BioSpatial where they are able to now visualize their data as never before.
- WARDS Training: The EMS Section data manager conducted 20 in-person training sessions on WARDS across the state in 2019.
- Customer Service Survey: A survey regarding customer service provided by the EMS section went out via the e-licensing system in the fall of 2018 to all certified and licensed EMS practitioners in the state. We received 1,300 responses that identified four primary opportunities for improvement:
  - Timeliness of response
  - Need for more staff
  - Better customer service
  - More transparent communication

These results were shared with section staff during the monthly strategic meeting and were then used as the basis for a quality improvement project for 2019. A brief survey was then developed and linked in each section staff members' email signature block. The results of those surveys are now shared at each monthly strategic meeting. As part of ongoing efforts to enhance our customer service, the initial re-design of the section's website began in 2019 to make it more concise, user-friendly, and ensure the most up-to-date information was posted.

- EMS Section Website: The EMS Section website is the repository for documents, statistics, and information regarding EMS in Wisconsin. A reorganization and revitalization of this valuable resource was identified as a top priority for 2019. While significant progress has been made, the project will not be completed until 2020.
- EMS Board Meeting Schedule: The EMS Board meeting schedule switched from bi-monthly to quarterly in 2019 as a way to increase the Board's efficiency and achieve savings in meeting expenses. The response thus far has been positive and work to evaluate the savings began in February 2020.

## **Workplan for the 2020-2021 Biennium**

There are a number of areas of focus for the EMS section in 2020-2021, including some that are carried over from the previous biennium. We are particularly aware of the situation in rural areas of Wisconsin where volunteer and paid services alike face significant challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified employees. That situation will be a lens through which the rest of our work over this biennium is viewed as we work with our partners, representative organizations, and EMS agencies to continue to build a robust, statewide EMS system. We grouped our work into the same three areas of concentration: education, licensing, and operations.

### **Education**

- Revised National EMS Educational Standards: A primary focus for this biennium is the rollout of new national educational standards for all levels of certification and licensure. This will involve meetings with the training centers and instructors across the state as we begin implementation of the revised standards. The revised National EMS Education standards address the issue of consistency with education, training, certification, and licensure of entry-level EMS personnel across the country. The work includes the revised curriculum, scope of practice, and continuing education hours. *Intended time for completion: review of materials and plan for implementation–December 2020. Implementation–December 2021.*
- Psychomotor Testing Changes: In conjunction with work completed during the 2018-2019 biennium, changes to the NREMT psychomotor testing will be implemented during 2021. EMS Section staff will be conducting a full roll-out with the training centers and the NREMT evaluators to ensure consistency in the implementation. *Intended time frame for implementation: beginning in September 2020 and throughout calendar year 2021.*
- Onboarding Process and Education for Service Directors and Medical Directors: There is frequent turnover in the role of service director and medical director and the individuals stepping into these roles often do so with little knowledge of the role, the expectations, or the statutory or regulatory responsibilities. EMS Section staff will work with the EMS Board and the state EMS medical director on the onboarding process for new service directors and new medical directors. The Physician Advisory Committee from the EMS Board will be engaged to assist with the medical director process. The EMS Section identified this gap and will work to design and implement an educational program for each role. *Intended time for completion: onboarding process–January 2021, education program–July 2021.*

### **Licensing**

- 2020 License Renewal Cycle: All EMR certifications, EMS practitioner licenses, and EMS service licenses were set to expire on June 30, 2020. That deadline was extended to September 30, 2020 by the Secretary-designee in response to stakeholder comments and as

part of the Department's COVID-19 response. As part of the ImageTrend platform upgrade from early 2019, the renewal application is being redesigned to be more user-friendly and will be deployed for use in February 2020. Section staff will be occupied with license renewal from February through July 2020 (allowing for late renewals after the June 30 expiration). Services have a revised service demographic form available to them as they renew their service license to ensure that the e-licensing database is kept up to date and to allow additional information for the telephonic-assisted CPR program to be collected.

*Intended time for completion: February 2020-October 2020.*

- E-licensing Updates: The license renewal, late renewal, and reinstatement applications are all undergoing revision prior to the start of the license renewal cycle to make them more user-friendly and easier to navigate. *Intended time for completion: February (license renewal and reinstatement) and October 2020 (late renewal).*

## Operations

- Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 Revision: It is anticipated that the revision will conclude by the third quarter of 2020 once proposed changes have been through the economic impact assessment public comment period, legislative council review, a public hearing, the governor's review, and legislative review. Section staff will continue to work with the Office of Legal Counsel and the administrative rules manager to bring the project to a close. *Intended time for completion: April 2021.*
- Wisconsin Admin. Code ch. Trans 309: The EMS Section is waiting for the approved revision of this section of administrative code regarding ambulance and medical equipment inspections (expected in March 2020). At the time of this report, the exact changes are unknown. Staff will evaluate the final approved changes and assess needed changes at that time. *Intended time for completion: tentatively planned for March 2021.*
- Data: EMS Section staff will continue work on mining the WARDS data to more clearly articulate the statewide EMS story for Wisconsin. The following reports and when they are tentatively scheduled for annual comparative re-runs are: Cardiac Arrest Ambulance Runs (March 2021), Wisconsin Workplace Survey (August 2021), and Pediatric Ambulance Runs: Facts and Trends (April 2021). The EMS Section will continue to work collaboratively with epidemiology and data staff in OPEHC, as well as other partners requested by the EMS Board's System Quality and Data Committee.
  - Section staff have begun discussions with BioSpatial about expanding the available data in the platform to include January 1, 2015, and beyond to enhance the applicability and use of the WARDS data. *Intended time for completion: December 2020.*
  - WARDS data will also be used in the development and review of evidence-based statewide protocols through the EMS Board and its Physician Advisory Committee. *Intended time for completion: December 2020.*
  - Telephonic-Assisted CPR (T-CPR): As part of the work for implementation of 2017 Act 296 and the telephonic-assisted CPR program, the EMS Section has begun work on assembling data on the dispatch centers providing this valuable service. It is our intent to create the first statewide dispatch center database with the assistance of partner organizations. This information will be critical to tracking data relative to T-CPR and evaluating the progress and success of the program. *Intended time for completion: August 2021.*
  - The National EMS Information System (NEMSIS) released version 3.5 in early 2020. EMS Section staff will be working with ImageTrend on testing and migration to version 3.5 from our current version of 3.4.0. New versions are released when needed in order to



meet the needs of the EMS industry and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of EMS. *Intended time for completion: Q1 2021.*

- Community EMS/Paramedicine: EMS Section staff will work with agencies on full implementation of 2017 Act 66 on community EMS and community paramedicine following approval of the Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 revisions. *Intended time for completion: ongoing beginning with approval of DHS 110.*
- Operational Plan Form Revision: In response to requests from agencies, staff have revised the operational plan form to be completely electronic for ease of completion and submission. The revision process will start following completion of the 2020-2023 license renewal cycle in September 2020. *Intended time for completion: March 2021.*
- EMS Communications Plan: The statewide plan is due for review and revision during 2021. The current plan was last revised in March 2019 and will be reviewed by partners and representative groups to incorporate their input and suggestions for improvement. *Intended time for completion: April 2021.*
- EMS Section Website: The EMS Section website is being reorganized and revitalized to make it more user-friendly and a greater resource for those involved and those interested in Wisconsin EMS. *Completion date: June 2020.*
- Statewide Patient Care Protocols: At the direction of the EMS Section Chief, the State EMS and Trauma Medical Director, in collaboration with the Physician Advisory Committee, has begun work on statewide patient care protocols. Based on the model offered by the National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO), these protocols will standardize the level of care at each level of practitioner across the state while still allowing medical directors some flexibility to add certain medications or skills within the approved scope of practice. *Intended time for completion: December 2020.*

Once the protocols are approved, an implementation plan and schedule will be developed and released. It is anticipated that 12 months may be needed for full implementation. *Intended time for completion: December 2021.*
- State Office Open Forums: EMS Section staff will work with the state EMS medical director to develop an open forum for service directors and medical directors to facilitate ongoing interaction. These forums would most appropriately be held in conjunction with the regional trauma advisory council (RTAC) meetings, healthcare emergency readiness coalition (HERC) meetings, the Wisconsin EMS Association conference and other meetings to leverage previously assembled audiences. These were initiated in July 2020 on a virtual basis due to COVID-19. *Intended timeframe for completion: ongoing throughout each year.*
- Exit Interview: EMS Section staff, in collaboration with the state EMS medical director, will develop a survey instrument to send to outgoing medical directors to understand any issues surrounding their departure. *Intended timeframe for completion: January 2021.*
- Workflow for Protocol Review and Updates: EMS Section staff, in collaboration with the state EMS medical director, will define the process for formal protocol and protocol review, including medical director engagement. *Intended timeframe for completion: January 2021.*
- Two-Year Plan for 2022-2023: EMS Section staff will be working to formalize the schedule for the preparation and submission of the biennial plan to the state legislature. *Intended timeframe for completion: June 2021.*

As with any plan, this one is subject to amendment or modification based on staffing, competing priorities, and/or additional direction provided by the office director or division administrator. The section will continue to do its best work with limited resources and reduced

staffing. Additional consideration for adequate staffing to match the increasing workload is requested.

## **Summary**

The EMS Section achieved several notable accomplishments during the last biennium, including the completion of the biennial license renewal, starting implementation of several major pieces of legislation, the start of the Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110 revision, a review and revision of the Funding Assistance Program (FAP), and leveraging the WARDS data to begin telling a more effective statewide EMS story. The current biennium presents challenges in the completion of the Wis. Admin. Code ch. DHS 110, implementing revised national EMS educational standards and changes to psychomotor testing, leveraging data to make evidence-based decisions to improve the EMS system and patient care, and completing a biennial license renewal cycle. The details of these past accomplishments and future challenges, including intended timeframes, have been presented in this report.