



May 13, 2010

Dear Ambulance Service Leader:

Your ambulance service has been selected to participate in a statewide study being conducted by Penn State University and funded by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania in cooperation with the Pennsylvania legislature (<http://www.rural.palegislature.us>). This study will investigate the financial viability and sustainability of rural ambulance services in Pennsylvania. Penn State was awarded the project under my direction. I have over 30 years of work and research experience and have worked on other related EMS projects in the Commonwealth.

As you are aware, all ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth are impacted by shrinking reimbursements and increased costs of operation. The goal of this study is to use the information gathered via the enclosed survey to report findings and make policy recommendations to key stakeholders, including the project sponsor, the Center for Rural PA, legislators, and EMS advocates. I am hopeful that this leads to the advancement of all EMS organizations throughout the Commonwealth.

The enclosed survey asks you a variety of questions about your organizational finances, staffing mix and levels, and organizational composition. The survey, instructions, a Fact Sheet on the study, and a Frequently Asked Questions sheet about the study are included in this packet.

Please consider the importance of your participation in this survey. Your time spent completing the survey will assist in the advancement of all ambulance services in the Commonwealth. It is anticipated that the results from this survey will assist statewide decision making for ambulance services for many years to come, but that can only happen with your participation.

If you have any questions regarding this material or the survey, please contact me at 717-948-6649 or 814-883-5740, or via email at jsr178@psu.edu. You will be able to track the progress of the grant at www.twitter.com/pehsc. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Schumann Rumberger".

Jill Schumann Rumberger
Assistant Professor
Penn State University - Harrisburg

*Measuring the Financial Viability and Sustainability of
Emergency Medical Service Providers in Rural Pennsylvania*

Fact Sheet

What: Policy questions have been raised concerning the current and future financial health of the Commonwealth's emergency medical services (EMS) independent agencies, especially those in rural areas. Of particular interest is how rural emergency medical services organizations compare to urban EMS agencies in terms of financial viability and sustainability. Independent EMS organizations will be asked to submit data on staffing levels and financial information, including revenue and expenses for analysis to develop best practice recommendations.

Who: Independent EMS organizations and those affiliated with a fire company will be asked to participate in the study. For the purposes of this study the independent EMS organization is defined as an organization that is privately held or a not-for-profit or is affiliated with a fire company. The study does not include EMS organizations owned in full or part by a hospital, including those with a Level 1 Trauma Center, or government entity, such a county or municipal government. Independent EMS organizations are both for-profit and not-for-profit and include those with staff who are paid, those with volunteers, and those who use a combination of paid and volunteer staff.

Dr. Jill Rumberger, a professor at Penn State Harrisburg, will lead the research effort. With over 30 years of work and research experience, she is well positioned to carry out this challenging project. Dr. Rumberger is joined on this exciting project by the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council (PEHSC) and the Institute for State and Regional Affairs, Penn State - Harrisburg.

When: The survey is planned for distribution in mid-May through June of this year.

The project officially began on January 4, 2010. The first phase of the project is to develop the survey and prepare it for distribution. The second phase is distribution of the survey and data collection. The third and final phase is analysis and reporting. The project sponsor, the Center for Rural PA, will publish the final report of the project on their web site sometime in the first quarter of 2011, <http://www.rural.palegislature.us/> and a links on PEHSC's website at the same time. Additional reporting and presentations may also occur following publication of the final report and they too will be available through PEHSC's website, www.pehsc.org.

Where: All independent EMS organizations throughout the Commonwealth are being asked to participate in this study.

How: When EMS organizations submit the completed survey, the organization's data will be sorted as either rural or urban. These two groups will then be compared to each other and to the state on average to create a benchmark of performance.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Who is being asked to complete the survey?

A: Independent EMS organizations and those affiliated with a fire company will be asked to participate in the study. For the purposes of this study the independent EMS organization is defined as an organization that is privately held or a not-for-profit or is affiliated with a fire company. The study does not include EMS organizations owned in full or part by a hospital, including those with a Level 1 Trauma Center, or government entity, such a county or municipal government. Independent EMS organizations are both for-profit and not-for-profit and include those with staff who are paid, those with volunteers, and those who use a combination of paid and volunteer staff.

Q: Will my organization's survey data be shared with anyone?

A: No, only summarized data will be publically reported. Individual organization survey responses will not be made public.

Q: Who sponsored this research effort?

A: The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is the sponsor of this research project. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, bicameral legislative agency that serves as a resource for rural policy within the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Learn more about this agency at <http://www.rural.palegislature.us/mission.html>.

Q: Who will see my data?

A: The Principle Investigator, Dr. Jill Rumberger, is responsible for the privacy and security of the survey data throughout the study. Surveys are being returned to her attention at the Center for Survey Research, Penn State – Harrisburg. A postage page envelope was included in the survey packet. Surveys can also be scanned and returned electronically or via fax. Specific information on how to return the survey is included with the survey.

Assisting Dr. Rumberger in data entry of the returned surveys will be the staff of the Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council (PEHSC). Once the data has been entered, Dr. Rumberger is solely responsible for the analysis of the data.

Q: Is there a web site where I can keep track of the project?

A: Yes, PEHSC will be providing updates on the progress of the project at www.twitter.com/pehsc.

Q: Who will see the final reports on the data?

A: The project sponsor, the Center for Rural PA, will publish the final report of the project on their web site, <http://www.rural.palegislature.us/> and links will be placed on PEHSC's website. Publication is anticipated in the first quarter of 2011. Additional reporting and presentations may also occur following publication of the final report.