

JO DAVIESS COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**Jo Daviess County (IL) County Board Ad Hoc Committee
Emergency Medical Services Sustainability
EMS Strategic Directive EMS 2020**

FINAL DOCUMENT

WHITE PAPER

Approved Unanimously by Sustainability Committee on January 10, 2020

In order to enhance Emergency Medical Service commitment, we must project our needs and awareness to those we serve. We need to establish a new trajectory - a new path forward that eliminates our archaic and obvious ineffective path. We need to look ahead 40 years instead of relying on the past 40 years as a current benchmark. The old path forward has not been effective for decades while a fresh new path is necessary for our survival. Organizations and leaders need to change and adjust to the world that surrounds them. WLB

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(Note: There may be some duplication within this report. It is sometimes necessary to repeat content that is necessary for multiple topics in order to maintain context)

(The term 'countywide' in this context [and throughout this entire document] can refer to current individual EMS agencies or a future combined Jo Daviess County EMS system.)

INTRODUCTION

Conclusions derived from the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Sustainability Committee

The EMS sustainability committee has been meeting for the past year and reviewing the status of Emergency Medical Service (EMS) in Jo Daviess County. In the opinion of this committee, if changes are not made, EMS within Jo Daviess County is not sustainable. In short, the current system is failing and will continue to fail.

On May 10, 2018 Hanover Ambulance lost its license to function and this service will likely not be revived. There have also been numerous times that the public did not get an appropriate response from their respective agencies after calling 911 for a medical emergency.

In the State of Illinois, EMS is considered a non-essential service. This committee believes that EMS in Jo Daviess County is an essential service. When someone calls for EMS, they should have an appropriate and immediate response provided by qualified personnel.

We believe that this report will provide information on how and why we came to our conclusions. Emergency Medical Services in Jo Daviess County can be saved, but it will need to change and adapt. We have a responsibility to include several concerns and recommendations. The one thing these recommendations have in common is there will be an associated cost. Additionally, significant funding sources will be needed to rekindle EMS as a sustainable public safety entity.

We are aware that changes in complex systems and additional funding cannot occur overnight. We feel that this must be a countywide priority. Should another service fail, a domino effect could take place affecting all EMS agencies in the county. We cannot maintain status quo fundamentals and expect to be successful. We cannot accept or anticipate more of the same. We must insist that we make the tough decisions today or face more difficult decisions tomorrow. A business (and EMS is a business) needs to have solid fundamentals in order to be successful. The longer this discussion lingers, the longer we hesitate, the closer we come to extinction.

It is our intention to determine a reasonable and clear path for change while identifying various options and configurations with the knowledge that we cannot guarantee success. Our first step in this process focuses on getting our message out to the people we serve, as well as to the County Board, City Mayors, organizations, businesses, and individuals whose livelihood depends on a thriving tourism.

We continue to need quality dependable EMS providers. The manner that we choose to move forward will absolutely determine the success or failure of Emergency Medical Services in Jo Daviess County. We need to address and evaluate current changes as well as challenges we never knew existed. It is projected that Jo Daviess County population may drop to 16,000 people in 2045 from a current population of approximately 21,500 in 2020. Growing communities generate tax dollars to support emergency services. Vanishing communities do not.

Our **MISSION** was to identify and evaluate all aspects of the EMS system currently in place in Jo Daviess County and to constructively use this information as a catalyst for endorsement and improvement of long-term professional value and sustained high quality of EMS throughout all of Jo Daviess County.

Our **VISION** was to develop and maintain professional and sustainable EMS services in Jo Daviess County that serves to improve response time and provides consistent, quality care to our citizens and visitors.

VALUE STATEMENT

This initiative was guided by common values and informed by our experiences, beliefs and overall commitment to make Jo Daviess a great place to live and visit. We are committed to a culture of teamwork, collaboration, and continuous improvement. We recognize the contribution of our volunteer members. Everyone on this committee had the same opportunity to share ideas

Our **SUSTAINABILITY EMPHASIS** addresses long-term growth and improvement based on current comprehensive data addressing all aspects of quality and progressive EMS. This includes, but is not limited to, coordination among all EMS and all Public Safety organizations with educational components, a coordinated leadership environment that includes multiple levels of training, community involvement and high constituent expectation, as well as assurance that the necessary credentials necessary to LEAD, PROSPER, and SERVE AS A MODEL benefits all residents and visitors to Jo Daviess County.

'An organization cannot be great if it's not good'

Results from a November 2019 United Counties Council of Illinois (UCCI) survey request referred to the following questions and answers. This is being provided as a brief synopsis of the countywide EMS systems. There is a total of five (5) EMS Provider Services in Jo Daviess County. The results are as follows.

UCCI SURVEY REQUEST: AMBULANCE SERVICES

UCCI SURVEY REQUEST/AMBULANCE SERVICES COUNTY NAME: Jo Daviess County

QUESTION #1 Do you have a county owned and operated ambulance service? **There are no County owned ambulances**

QUESTION #2 How many ambulance services operate in your county? **5 - East Dubuque, Galena, Elizabeth, Stockton, and Warren. Also, Private Service such as Leamon's, Star and Paramount sometimes 'operate' within Jo Daviess County**

QUESTION #3 Does your county have a contract for service with an ambulance service?
Yes - Individual Special Service Area agreements with Galena, Elizabeth and Warren. East Dubuque and Stockton do not have these SSA agreements.

QUESTION #4 How many ambulances are dedicated to 911 calls only and cannot do transfers?
None provide transfers. All County Ambulances are 911 only. East Dubuque 1 ambulance; Galena - 3; Elizabeth - 3; Stockton - 2; Warren - 3

QUESTION #5 What do you do if all your ambulances are busy and a call for service comes in?
Mutual Aid Agreements are used by all 5 services

QUESTION #6 Do you levy a tax or otherwise subsidize your ambulance service? **Galena, Elizabeth, and Warren levy a tax, but the levy represents only a portion of the respective budgets. East Dubuque EMS is part of the Fire Department and gets City funding. Stockton is part of Stockton Fire Department and receives County property tax money.**

QUESTION #7 Do you restrict the number of ambulance services that operate in your county? **No**

08Nov19

Acknowledgement

This sustainability issue came to light about eighteen months ago following an EMS Recruitment and Retention initiative sponsored by the Law Enforcement and Courts Committee of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors and presented in August 2017. During that process, a designated committee highlighted challenges with recruiting and retaining members in our local volunteer EMS agencies while sharing ways to improve this issue. This sustainability project significantly expands the scope and necessity of changes to EMS services in Jo Daviess County.

We are extremely blessed to have qualified caring EMS providers throughout Jo Daviess county that are willing to make exceptional sacrifice on a 24/7/365 basis to ensure that we all remain safe. EMS services create a sense of security for our friends and constituents with the knowledge that trained professionals will be there to assist in times of need and to deal with their emergency. Emergency Medical Service Responders work in timely fashion as professionals with necessary skills and empathy, while sometimes dealing with the very worst day of a person's life.

There were several members who served on this sustainability committee although the exact number fluctuated somewhat throughout the 12-month period. All were approved by the Jo Daviess County Board. We were assisted by other representing resources that were valuable to this mission. Specific areas represented included the three EMS agencies that actively participated (East Dubuque, Elizabeth, and Galena), Citizen Representative, Sheriff's Office, Jo Daviess County Board, States Attorney's Office, Fire Department, Chestnut Mountain Resort, Funeral Homes, County Mayors, the Galena Territory, Jo Daviess County Transit, Midwest Medical Center, and a retired City Manager.

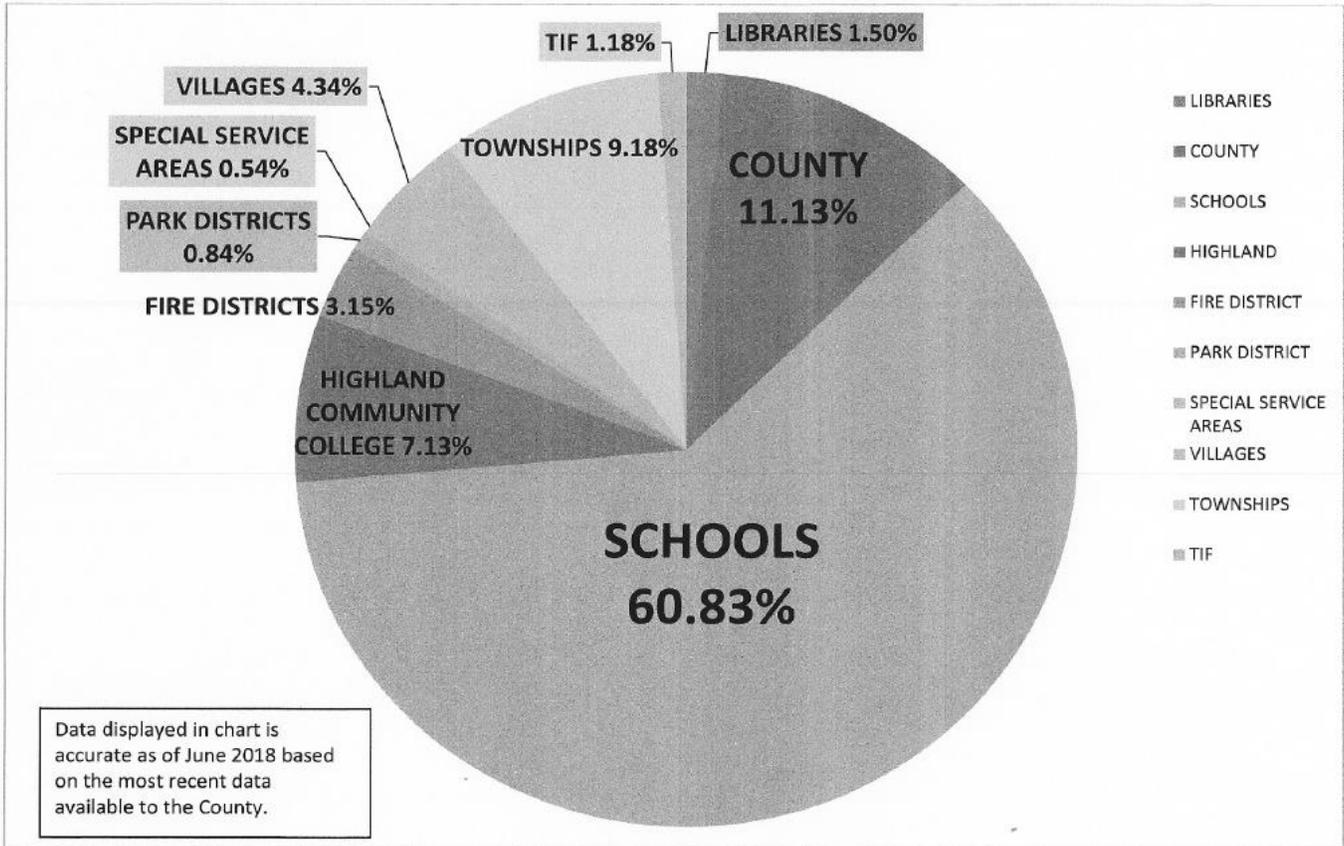
This report would not have been possible without the contribution of committee members and others interested in the process for all the right reasons. Provided was time, data, observation, discussion, and opinion. We need to acknowledge the Jo Daviess County Board and ambulance providers in Jo Daviess County. We must include all the first responders, EMTs and Paramedics that keep getting the job done in order to allow our constituents to have a chance. From the EMS leaders to the newest recruit, this project is for all emergency medical service members who routinely make incredible sacrifices to ensure their communities have reliable EMS services.

Some fundamental rules that were established include:

- We will respect all information shared.
- Our findings and recommendations are only suggestions.
- We understand that any outcome will be determined by a vote of the people we serve.
- There are no foregone conclusions in terms of expectation.
- We understand our findings may be troubling to some County EMS agencies.
- Our focus is for the future good of those who live and visit Jo Daviess County.

This project was designed to take a closer look at many significant Emergency Medical Service issues, highlighting several variables by which current EMS agencies function. This process serves as a catalyst to multiple operational areas being scrutinized including documented situations in which some county EMS agencies were struggling to meet the response demands within their respective areas. It is obvious that all EMS services in Jo Daviess County face recruit and response challenges that began several years ago. It is also evident that the process for dealing with these challenges may have been effective 30 years ago but will not be effective in 2020 and beyond.

WHERE DOES THE PROPERTY TAX MONEY GO?



JO DAVIESS COUNTY, ILLINOIS

EMS Services in Jo Daviess County

There are five EMS agencies that are operating in Jo Daviess County. They are Stockton, Warren, Elizabeth, Galena, and East Dubuque. Hanover has been out of operation since May 10, 2018. While participation for this White Paper was openly encouraged by all five remaining EMS Services, Stockton and Warren EMS agencies stopped participating in January 2019. Notwithstanding the Committee Chairperson, Galena EMS stopped participating in January of 2019 and returned to the table in April 2019. Regardless of attendance, all five agencies received meeting agendas and meeting minutes throughout the process.

The five remaining EMS service providers function with three different affiliates serving as their respective associated medical facility. East Dubuque and Galena are associated with MercyHealth™ in Rockford, Illinois. Elizabeth and Warren are associated with SwedishAmerican Hospital® in Rockford, Illinois, and Stockton is associated with OFS St. Anthony Medical Center in Rockford, Illinois. Each of these facilities provide overall affiliation although each has its own EMS training programs, its own rules, its own Instructors, as well as its own medical protocols that serve as the basis of patient care in the field. All affiliates are guided by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Jo Daviess County has a population of over 22,000 citizens within approximately 610 miles². The daily population can rise from 5,000-15,000 or more visitors routinely during many weekends throughout the year. That said, all county-wide public services (Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS) are critical in maintaining a safe environment with a reasonably quick response to emergency situations.

Citizens generally support EMS while hoping to never use the service. Public expectation assumes that those in charge of these organizations are good leaders with the appropriate training and education that projects a positive professional and ethical image, that makes good personnel and financial decisions, and who are interested in public outreach and support of, and from, the community they serve. These elements positively impact the respect and trust of the community and may have a significant positive impact on the future of respective EMS services.

Within the past few years there have been instances of delayed ambulance responses within Jo Daviess County. An addendum is attached on the next page highlights delayed responses from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2019. This is one of many reasons prompting this effort in EMS sustainability. This committee was concerned about how or why this is happening and went looking for answers and solutions. They decided to use this issue to finally step up and make these critical issues known to the good people that we serve and to the County Board and the local Mayors who have a responsibility to provide quality EMS care. Evident were EMS providers and those offering time as citizens, law enforcement, businesspersons, elected officials etc. that spoke out as concerned citizens. No one on this committee chose to maintain the status quo.

Within this Sustainability White Paper, we bring to light challenging and diverse options that specifically address the role of EMS in Jo Daviess County in the future. The challenges are great, and the options range from minimal to out of reach. Regardless, we are approaching this issue with the vigor that we feel is necessary. We understand that this project is far-reaching and can highlight various options for possible change in the role of EMS in Jo Daviess County. Addressing this sustainability crisis is both challenging and necessary.

County-wide data from 01Jan2017 through 31Dec2019

These numbers represent Jo Daviess County EMS Services that were paged and either did not respond to the page for service or did not have an adequate number of crew members to respond to a call for EMS service.

	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
No response to page	9	5	8	22
No Crew	13	15	14	42
	<u>22</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>64</u>

East Dubuque and Elizabeth have no instances of lack of crew call for an ambulance response.

The former Hanover EMS is not included in this data – they were no longer operating effective May 10, 2018.

This data does not include instances in which an EMS service was on a call and was unable to respond to a second or third call. There were 19 instances in which services could not put a second (or third) ambulance into service while responding to the first call.

Data was provided by the Jo Daviess County Sheriff’s Office Dispatch Center.

Licensed Illinois ambulance services are in violation of IDPH rules if they cannot respond to an ambulance call within their respective service area.

EMS is not an Essential Service

Illinois residents may believe that EMS is an essential service. However, no mandate exists for the provision of EMS in Illinois. EMS, unlike Law Enforcement and Fire Department agencies, is NOT considered an 'essential service', meaning that there is no standard regarding who is ultimately responsible for the provision and funding of EMS (rural or metro). It is a common misconception that calling 911 for a medical emergency will result in an ambulance responding immediately within a reasonable time. Due to this lack of mandate in Illinois, emergency medical services (EMS) is functioning as a 'nonessential' service.

An "essential service" means that the interruption or termination of an EMS service would place the public (whether whole or in part) at risk regarding local EMS coverage. This report identifies the need for the County Board to mandate EMS in Jo Daviess County as an essential service. Many such agreements have been locally approved throughout the country. Unfortunately, in most cases, these agencies have no legal duty or mandate to do so. This is an issue for the State of Illinois to address.

It is time to move forward in the evolution of EMS in Illinois to declare the need for the service it provides as essential. Statewide affirmation and approval may establish requirements for EMS agencies. This will also allow for transparency as well as provide a platform by which EMS agencies can be better utilized and organized. If we are to move forward with a contemporary model of prehospital care, which includes such things as mobile integrated healthcare, local educational opportunities, community paramedicine, and wellness plans, the first step will be to recognize the legitimate need for all Illinois residents to have access to EMS by way of an organized and efficient system of EMS availability.

Some states have begun to provide some funding in the form of staffing grants but that alone will not change much and will certainly not impact any change in policy or organization structure to any significant degree. What is needed is a fundamental and transformational change in attitude, representation, operations, funding, and leadership. We need to be represented, funded, valued, and respected. This emerging crisis demands a multifaceted approach that recognizes and addresses our concerns and challenges. It is imperative that Jo Daviess County Board Members, as well as each community providing EMS service in Jo Daviess County collectively pass a mandate that EMS services in Jo Daviess County are, in fact, an 'Essential Service' to the same level of local Law Enforcement and Fire Department agencies.

'Resiliency is not in play when you refuse to accept change'

Organizational Challenges

Kicking the can down the road after over thirty years of minimal status quo oversight is no longer an option. Getting this job done is complex and cannot be taken lightly. Increasing calls for service, diminishing EMS personnel rosters, proportionate lack of funding compared to other public safety agencies, and evolving mandatory requirements for EMS qualifications, training, certification, report documentation, and protocol changes, are a constant challenge.

The results of topic research and nationwide articles and surveys make it patently clear that public safety agencies, and specifically volunteer fire and emergency medical service (EMS) agencies throughout the United States are finding it difficult to maintain adequate membership levels. Effective recruitment and retention are perpetual journeys, not a destination or a one-time plan.

Funding is going to be a significant task in cash-strapped Jo Daviess County. Other issues include organizational leadership and human resource proficiency, administrative competency, with an understanding of transactional versus transformational leadership. This is coupled with the challenge of a long-term parochial management attitude. It becomes easy to see why these challenges exist and why time is literally running out. It is important to focus on the qualification of potential of Board Members with a business and/or leadership background who are engaged with the process and who bring something to the table. The recent switch to Special Service Areas for a few of the local EMS agencies serves as a catalyst to moving EMS organizations and important issues forward in a timely and professional manner.

As part of post-report activities, it will be imperative that members of the Special Service Area Committee, individual representative EMS Board Members and this Sustainability Committee reach out to our local representatives to discuss these sustainability issues, highlighting the challenges we face and making them aware of the consequences facing Jo Davies County. The current 'non-essential service' moniker may have an impact on our ability to move ahead.

Being part of a public safety service is a proud and important task. Public safety organizations are not businesses or social clubs. They are vital organizations wound within the fabric of all communities. To wit, this is a challenge within itself as there has been resistance to eliminate EMS as a social club in favor of a valid recognized professional Public Safety organization.

Fundamental human resource responsibilities in any organization include:

- **Recruiting** and hiring qualified applicants and providing them with necessary training and fundamental objectives and goals
- **Rétention** of desirable members by encouraging and challenging them to be successful, trusted and model members within the organizational framework for continued employment
- **Succession Development** for opportunities that allow members to seek his/her highest goals as a trusted ranking member of the organization
- **Sustainability** focusing on the need to hire and maintain quality members in a positive environment, and to deliver EMS services in a timely and professional manner, without exception

Sustainability Goals

- Represent all Jo Daviess County EMS agencies in Jo Daviess County
- Recognize that the EMS Services in Jo Daviess County is an 'Essential Service'
- Determine the main issues that cause a lack of response in certain areas within the county
- Examine and Identify the reason why EMS members join and why they leave an organization
- Lend support in terms of ideas, resources, past practices, and potential changes to sustainability efforts – What have other organizations done? What have these organizations not done? What has worked? What has not worked? Are members engaged and informed? Are members uncertain and frustrated? Are members part of the solution or part of the problem?
- Showcase initiatives that are working, and improve on those that are not working, with the understanding that there is likely 'no one size fits all' solution
- Offer sustainability standards that can be shared throughout Jo Daviess County.
- Offer a county-wide model for organizational communication specifically addressing the issues of EMS sustainability
- Develop a process to share this information among Jo Daviess County agencies and providers on a regular basis
- Develop opportunities that connect with, and educate, the citizens we serve on all that we do, why we do it, and how we do it
- Provide education to citizens regarding home and health safety initiatives that may have the positive impact of fewer emergency calls
- Incorporate a focus on sustainability planning as an integral part of the respective organizations focus and policies
- Develop a final report in phases that address current sustainability issues as well as comprehensive long-term issues and challenges
- Provide a mechanism that continues this organizational challenge after the completion of the final report to ensure that a sustained level of continued oversight and analysis is available to assist with the necessary changes as they become available in the future.

*'Our anticipated goal was not to predict exactly what will be,
but to create a vision of what could be'*

Sustainability Overview

The term 'sustainability' focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet such needs. This requires the resources, ability, and structure to frame decisions in terms of years and decades as opposed to weeks and months.

First responders understand that the day a person dials 911 is likely the worst day of his/her life. The challenge is to respond quickly with the right medical equipment in the hands of professional emergency caregivers. Most volunteer fire and EMS organizations are aware of the challenge of EMS sustainability. Rural communities particularly are seeing aging population data with fewer younger people stepping up to volunteer. EMS agencies across the country are losing volunteers to the out-of-area career services as members seek job opportunities or simply leave the area for better jobs.

Many small rural communities across the country feel the pain of declining membership and even greater challenges in recruitment and retention, while call volume continues to increase in all public safety areas. Fire and EMS services in these rural volunteer areas save taxpayers well over \$50 billion dollars per year compared to what they would pay with career services. Due to changes beyond our control, the time has come to consider appropriate compensation for EMS providers and to face the fact that EMS volunteerism is being challenged to the point of possible extinction in the foreseeable future.

One must take into consideration the tremendous amount of EMS information regarding the difference between rural and metro America. According to Dr. Richard Sidwell, a Trauma Surgeon, "No matter how you look at the statistics regarding rural trauma, whether it's excess deaths, likelihood of dying, preventable mortality, it's basically 50% higher when compared to urban injury," Sidwell said. "If you are injured in a rural environment with the same injury as in an urban area, you are at least 50% more likely to die. This is a consistent finding." (*Rural Unintentional Injuries*)

Rural health experts across the country report that a system that relies exclusively on the goodwill of people is simply unsustainable. EMS agencies need money to recruit and retain qualified workers, for upkeep of equipment which is extremely expensive and for training and mandatory continuing education. When the funding shuts down, services close.

Solutions to a broken rural health care system require sensitivity in communities that have deep emotional ties to their volunteer EMS workers, such as those in Jo Daviess County. These heroes have done everything they can to stay above water. The idea of folding or contracting ambulance services from other towns or private companies is generally met with resistance, because the services don't feel "hometown" anymore – This is a challenge that we may face. The reality is that you cannot have it both ways. Systems mature like people. They grow, and nothing lasts forever. With 75% of our nation's geography classified as rural or frontier and more than 22% of the country's population residing in areas defined as rural, one must question the future for rural EMS.

In some areas, for-profit EMS services are waiting at the border to pounce and take over, the emphasis going from a tax supported rural volunteer service to a for-profit enterprise. Staffing shortfalls are prevalent in Jo Daviess County. In addition, our participant numbers are constantly in flux for various reasons listed in this document. In some communities, there is minimal financial support to their local public safety organization creating a strain when it comes to training and

properly equipping members. In some communities these challenges are shared with their respective community members, while the opposite is evident in other communities.

The Town of Hanover Ambulance, Inc., one of six services in Jo Daviess County, dissolved their service on May 10, 2018, having surrendered its Vehicle Service Provider license for permanent and nonrenewable cancellation and revocation by the Illinois Department of Public Health. It was determined that Hanover Ambulance Inc. had a repeated pattern and practice of violating multiple sections of the EMS System Act and refusing to produce records required by the IDPH in its official investigation of those violations. Elizabeth, Galena and Savanna EMS services initially picked up the slack in Hanover for several months, further impacting Jo Daviess County EMS providers. Galena EMS stopped responding to first-due calls to Hanover in April 2019 but continues to serve as a Mutual Aid partner to Elizabeth EMS as needed.

The services provided by ALL public safety agencies are to be commended without exception. These folks have sacrificed much over the span of many years in order to serve their respective neighbors and their communities. All these Jo Daviess County heroes deserve the accolades they received over the years. They provided a service that most individuals would not. These heroes now have a responsibility to be forthright and completely honest with their respective communities and service areas about the many challenges they face.

Discussing the impact of longer response times and the lack of necessary responders, and the impact this has on meeting the core mission of the organization, is vital. This discussion may come as a shock to constituents that believe that qualified responders will be arriving quickly to effectively deal with their problem. What they do not understand is the operational mechanism of that call from receipt of call until an ambulance arrives to treat them. Using the Galena Territory as an example, hardly a week goes by that Galena or Elizabeth ambulance service members need to explain why it takes 15-20 minutes to respond to an EMS call. This represents one of several educational opportunities that need to be addressed, a perfect example of our responsibility going forward.

There are trends that have been developing for many years that challenge the concept of volunteerism. The take-away from this is not that we are going away, but that first responders as well as those they serve understand the level of response capability available.

The sustainability of an organization is an evolving process. It is likely that some initiatives taken today will not be useful in five years. All recommendations from all public safety members should be considered an opportunity for advancement and better service to the constituents and visitors to Jo Daviess County. The bottom line is we simply do not know where EMS will reside in the future. What we do know is that we have the time, the power, and the ability to identify various options and to plan accordingly.

Sustainability is critical for any organization, certainly including volunteer public safety. When an organization is not able to retain an adequate number of experienced and qualified personnel, it has the obvious impact of negatively affecting individuals in need and impacting the mindset of responders who cannot respond for various reasons. Succession planning is a vital human resource tool that can assist in the process of sustainability by developing a planned structure that maintains high service levels, having enough members on call, consistency, professionalism, and confidence that we can get this job done. Succession Planning is a human resource initiative in which potential

organizational leaders are prepared and groomed in advance for various roles within an organization. This eliminates unnecessary delay and insures an understanding of the role prior to hiring.

A constant revolving door of members can have a significant impact on both the financial and human resource aspect of an organization. These include the lack of desire of members to give 100%; the development of cliques that undermine and divide organizational initiatives; the lack of sense of duty; and low member morale. What is needed is quality leadership by quality personnel. This is done with an emphasis on human resources, training, camaraderie, a sense of belonging, succession planning and providing quality equipment and practical policies, all within a foundation of respect, trust, and responsibility.

Consolidation of services may be an option to explore, although a reasonable time frame will need to be put in place for this or any other option provided. The challenge with consolidation is that a vote to dissolve is followed by a vote to approve - a potentially drawn-out and possible political affair. There are also potential negative consequences in delaying the process. Other challenges include an effort to consolidate EMS agencies (and protocols) under one umbrella (one Affiliation), as well as associated challenges by EMS members who may prefer to maintain the current status quo regardless of the potential impact of impending failure. All stakeholders (which could essentially refer to everyone in Jo Daviess County) must have the opportunity to get involved in this process. The goal is to develop a more effective and sustainable EMS service facilitated in a rational and professional manner. This is no easy feat.

The concept of Integrated Healthcare takes EMS care to another dimension with the intent of patient follow-up, identifying resource needs for patients, contacting family members if necessary, attempting to assist patient so that he or she does not repeat as a patient. This concept is successful in many areas of the country and addresses an ongoing challenge to EMS providers, specifically people calling ambulances for situations that simply do not require an ambulance. Other resources can be used in these situations so that EMS providers can concentrate on true emergency calls. This type of initiative benefits both the EMS service and the patient. It also allows ambulances to more effectively deal with more critical situations and less 'lift assist', 'medical evaluation', or 'I need a ride to the hospital' calls.

'The traditional way of doing business no longer exists. Change is not an option - It is mandatory.'

Sustainability Challenges

Most EMS agencies will agree that volunteer numbers are constantly in flux for many other reasons. People generally have less time available to volunteer now than in decades past. In some communities, there is less financial support to their local public safety organizations, creating a strain when it comes to training and equipping members.

These are some of the questions that members need to answer as they consider EMS service.

- Am I doing this for the right reason?
- Do I understand the expectations?
- Is there a general sense of pride within the organization?
- Do I feel like I was properly oriented upon entry to the organization?
- Are members treated with respect?
- Is there a clear sense of mission, vision, and values?
- Do I enjoy the people and the job?
- Do I feel safe while performing my duties?
- Is on-going training adequate?

The most critical Human Resource responsibilities are hiring qualified applicants, retention of desirable employees, and succession development to ensure sustainability and institutional knowledge.

Retaining people after being recruited is a sizable task. Good leadership, professional image, high morale, and recognition of service are important to the process. That said, as a volunteer organization, there are significant external and internal challenges to those expressing an interest in the EMS service as noted below.

External challenges to joining:

- Increased financial needs (two salaries needed)
- Generational differences
- Increased number of calls
- Increased training and meeting demands
- Schedule based on call schedule
- Significant family obligations

Internal issues within the organization:

- Low morale
- Poor leadership
- Improper or poor management
- Lack of orientation
- Transactional decision making
- No discernable focus on effective Human Resource commitment

As we lose personnel for any reason, there is more loss than just another vacancy. We may be losing years of experience, education, and knowledge based on time devoted to our cause. This can sometimes be more difficult to replace than the individual.

Some Important questions to ask include:

- Are we pleased with our ability to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges in the best interest of those we serve?
- Is our existing organizational structure (Administrative and Operational) compatible for functional long-term levels of sustainability?
- Do those we serve have a clear understanding of the various issues we face regarding a quality public safety service?
- Do your service providers have a clear understanding of the various issues we face regarding a quality sustained public safety service?
- Do we have the right administrative team in place to go where we need to go?
- What can this committee offer providers regarding best practices for long term viability?
- What can this committee offer those we serve to better understand our role and to eliminate unnecessary responses?
- What can we offer in terms of best practice and information sharing with our cohorts so that this becomes an important collective challenge in which all Jo Daviess County EMS agencies can all contribute and participate?
- Is this initiative 'all or none' – that is, does every Jo Daviess County EMS service need to be on-board in order to be successful?
- How can we structure a plan that determines our best opportunity, responsibility, and process for developing a phased process to ensure long term success of this initiative?
- What reasonable timeline can you place on completion of this initiative?
- What type of resistance can we expect from existing EMS agencies and the taxpaying public?
- How important is standardization in terms of public concern, fiscal responsibility, and overall response capability?
- Are we truly comfortable that what we have been doing is sustainable?

'Problems that are ignored cannot be resolved.'

Internal Barriers to Sustainability

- The concept of volunteerism is not as prevalent today as in the past
- More significant family and job responsibilities
- The low number of citizens willing to assist in volunteer programs, particularly in the emergency public services
- Some people are not physically or mentally programmed to deal with medical emergencies
- A general lack of organizational leadership and development, effective human resources and budgeting capability, current and reliable policy, open-door policy, and community outreach
- Increased financial needs – (two or three salaries are needed to survive)
- Members working out of town
- Lack of understanding regarding the type of emergency services offered
- Inability to dedicate time for training and continuing education and certification
- This is a commitment that sometimes cannot be scheduled, or a schedule that is not conducive to an individuals' time availability
- Impact of generational differences on all jobs, including public safety
- Holidays / Time away from family
- Weather extremes
- Increased call volume and decreased time to commit
- Calls during specific times of the day / days of the week
- Time consuming responses due to rural response zones, large coverage areas, distant hospital location
- Time commitment regarding calls, meetings, training drills, and necessary paperwork
- Significant and increased training and CEU's required for members
- Requirement of a physical ability test and medical clearance
- Continued fostering of a 'good-old-boy hiring system' that eliminates new people with new perspectives

Unfortunately, if we continue to maintain the status quo instead of looking at significant change, we do so with the understanding that there can be no reasonable expectation that these issues are going to go away in the near or distant future.

'Hoping that members show up for a call is not a strategy or an option, it's a risk'

External Barriers to Sustainability

- No active recruitment and maintenance strategy
- Limited on-going communication with other EMS service providers
- A general complacency and general acceptance that 'the job is getting done'.
- Limited knowledge of the importance of staffing issues or understanding of an active recruitment and retention process
- Lack of outreach and research from volunteer agencies
- EMS relationships with local Fire Departments may need to improve
- Low morale (or perception)
- Poor leadership (or perception)
- Lack of proper management (or perception)
- No real personal commitment or sense of belonging
- Lack of orientation, mentoring, training, and retraining
- Lack of effective communication
- Lack of respect for organizational diversity
- Lack of consideration of generational differences
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of communicating the 'why' something is done
- Lack of input from those impacted by change
- Lack of funding for training and education
- Lack of follow-up
- Lack of respect and camaraderie
- Lack of guiding rules and policy
- Policy and guideline confusion
- Lack of progressive discipline and reasonable consequences
- Lack of understanding that failure to engage as directed is not a disciplinary issue but an abandonment issue.
- Lack of understanding by the Legislators, the State of Illinois, IDPH, and affiliated hospitals of current rural EMS challenges
- Lack of a strategic plan

This is not a complete list. For the reasons mentioned above, there are volunteer services in which many people may decline to participate. This can be due to inconsistent scheduling, the emergency nature of the job, lack of focus, lack of communication or simply the type of activity involved in the public safety professions.

'Public Safety is a noble calling, but not everyone will, or should, call.'

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations to address an extremely complex situation. It is not intended to serve as a 'one size fits all' answer sheet, given the degree of intricacy among EMS service providers in Jo Daviess County and across the nation and the world.

One of the keys to long-term stability and sustainability within any organizational structure change is thorough consideration and significant involvement of all disciplines that may be impacted by any transformation. The results of topic research and nationwide articles, surveys, and significant data points make it patently clear that public safety agencies, in this case Jo Daviess County Emergency Medical Service providers, like many rural EMS agencies across the United States, have found it difficult to maintain adequate membership levels. This problem is like a snowball rolling down a hill - the issue becomes heightened the further the snowball rolls as other related issues become prevalent. These can include slower response to calls, lack of qualified crews, multiple call-outs before a crew is underway, ineffective training issues, a lack of consistent patient care among and within EMS agencies, unacceptable response times, and a non-existent human resource structure designed to address the most important aspect of any organization, the *human* resource. These issues are exacerbated, because any EMS agency that has difficulty in responding to calls, will impact another EMS agency that will be forced to travel further, and so forth.

As our work progresses, there will be no foregone conclusions in terms of expectation. While EMS agencies throughout the county may be participating or kept in the loop, we understand that the existing parochial standard of individual community EMS may be challenged. Many EMS agencies lack the necessary internal programs for effective recruitment initiatives and for sustainable member programs and benefits generally designed to hire personnel, to retain members, and to develop succession criteria that ensures consistent management and leadership capabilities within an organization.

While the issue of countywide consistency may be suitable at some point, our goal is not to come up with a plan to correct this issue. Our goal is to fact-find any and all aspects of Jo Daviess County EMS and to respect all information provided in this effort. We do this with the understanding that this effort will be fully documented and our findings are suggestions - that is, we do not have the final say in any decision, but may have some final sway as citizens, policy providers, and county executives use our information to determine what can be done in the best interest of our citizens. Each EMS agency has been provided the opportunity to engage in this process. To be clear, this Committee has not had any preconceived agenda at any point during this process. To the contrary, this committee simply provided data and recommendations that can be shared with County elected officials who will be tasked with making final decisions, or not, based on the information provided.

This Ad-hoc committee, a temporary branch of the Law and Courts Committee, a branch of the Jo Daviess County Board, was established at the request of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors to address this issue in November 2018.

Representation includes EMS and other public safety agency directors, EMS members, community representatives, business owners, and local elected officials. It is our goal to have this sustainability initiative finalized and a white paper submitted in November 2019 with the intent of providing this document to the full County Board in January 2020.

This group was determined to review the reasons why this initiative may be necessary, now and in the future. This committee addressed the challenges and barriers that we face and highlight the impact to both the agencies and the public when issues occur. In addition, we were tasked to create a document to support all agencies, irrespective of their size or type, in their pursuit of a reasonable and manageable countywide EMS sustainability processes. We do this with the understanding that new ideas are sometimes frightening...they challenge what is known and accepted.

Several internal projects were discussed, and a few placed into service, during this process. One was the development of a Q and A form designed to gather and share information from the Committee and each EMS agency in the County. This served as a tool for discussion purposes. We used this information to determine both the consistency and variances of the EMS agencies. We also reached out to local public groups to share our initiatives and hopefully validate our findings. A second outreach opportunity is the development of a program that provides county-wide data points to several phases of EMS response, such as 911 call (alarm time) to in-service time, followed by EMS response to arrival. Other data includes time to receiving hospital, delays and the reasons for the delay, scheduling issues, mutual aid, automatic aid, as well as providing an environment where members feel welcome discussing these issues. While some individual agencies provided good data within their respective area, there has never been an effort to share and possibly consolidate this information county-wide. A third project involves reaching out to our respective communities to determine what we can do better to assist our citizens and to provide a better level of education to reduce non-emergency medical responses.

Balancing the concepts of progress and tradition reflects moving forward without losing sight of the past. Progress is not about taking sides, it's about sharing opinions. A continued lack of an effective, sustainable EMS service may have a negative impact on the future of a respective service as well as on the people we serve.

There should be no internal or external barriers to expanding our scope to ensure quality within this process. *The Jo Daviess County Ad-hoc Committee for EMS Sustainability* wishes all area agencies much success as they move forward and as they permit these issues to be discussed and addressed. We recognize and thank those members who have made a year-long commitment to serve on this committee.

Jo Daviess County Emergency Medical Services face a growing and potentially dangerous crisis. On the surface, this crisis is about declining volunteerism and the difficulties associated with ensuring ambulances are appropriately staffed and able to respond when needed. But at a deeper level, this crisis is about navigating a major change in how rural EMS is led, understood, envisioned, valued and funded in Jo Daviess County Illinois. Rural ambulance services often have low call volumes and limited reimbursement from transports, they have relied on the subsidy of donated or volunteer labor to make their respective operation possible and feasible. The donated labor (volunteer subsidy) picks up the slack minimally when considering the cost of providing EMS service (EMS Stations, ambulances, vehicle maintenance, medical and other supplies, insurance, worker's compensation, State inspections, billing hardware, costs for pagers and radios, electronic call system, medical reporting, electronic response system, vehicle and building maintenance, uniforms, and the list goes on). This yields a significant dollar output each year while actual subsidies began fading away over a decade ago.

People no longer volunteer in the same numbers they once did and, increasingly, rural ambulance services need to incentivize staff with call pay, run pay and, in some services, even full wages. The volunteer subsidy is disappearing due to changes in socioeconomics (people have less time), demographics (many communities are aging and depopulating), attitudes (younger residents do not feel the same about volunteering as previous generations) and the increasing demands of EMS (longer transports, more training physical and mental challenges, and general expectations). This has left a shrinking pool of potential volunteers and shrinking service rosters in many communities. The downside is that all indicators suggest this situation will only get worse in coming years.

The impact is serious. As rosters shrink, fewer people are available to take calls. Services are already not able to effectively deal with their respective call volume even though some EMS workers are on call for days and weeks at a time. EMS services rely on two or three qualified members on every call, and a few services have trouble mustering crews at certain times of the day or week. Some services are experiencing delayed response, and some are even missing calls. Such a situation is dangerous for patients, the public and for overworked EMS workers, particularly in consideration that most have 'real' jobs, and family commitments.

There is a huge difference between the 'past' and the 'past tradition'

Potential Issues and Solutions

Rural volunteer EMS has suffered through an identity crisis for over forty years. The question we need to answer is 'Are we a social club, a trade or a profession?' (Hint: We're not a social club) Historically, rural EMS has operated as a proud trade/social club requiring minimal education and a group of respected community volunteers dedicated to get the job done as they watched their EMS service slowly deteriorate. Unfortunately, those glory days are obviously gone and will never return. Overcoming resistance to change is difficult but necessary. Although some progress has been made with educational minimums, there is still resistance from EMS leaders who do not want the heightened requirements to hinder recruitment efforts in their status quo world. The fact is, it is time to embrace enhanced patient care, within reason, and to raise the bar of professionalism for the next 40 years.

EMS providers can learn from the nursing profession. They developed a stronger educational base over thirty (30) years ago with a determined outcome, upward mobility, improved salaries and professional and community respect. EMS Services need a stronger education base if it intends to expand into community paramedicine and other services. This is necessary if we want to grow into a more stable and meaningful contributor to the community and within the healthcare continuum. While the benefits of improved education may be understood by EMS Boards, taxpayers and the general public, we need to start this process now. If we choose to repeat or overemphasize what we have done in the past we will be having this same discussion every year as our County EMS services all fail.

The challenges are exponentially greater today compared to years past. First responder numbers are decreasing, the elderly population is increasing with limited caregivers available, people are using EMS services as a taxi service which can impact responses to emergency calls. In addition, there is a lack of general services available to deal with non-emergency medical situations. Many emergency medical calls function as an ambulance trip to the hospital, a discharge from the hospital, followed by another trip to the hospital within hours or days, due to a lack of care services. We have been in situations where the patient we just took to the Emergency Department passes us on the highway as we return to our EMS quarters. There is a reduced number of qualified care givers available, and there is a lack of medical access facilities to deal with the variety of issues within the medical spectrum in this rural area. These situations are not going away and will be further exacerbated unless significant changes occur in the very near future.

'No one wants an ambulance logo to claim 'EMS – 50 years of service impeded by progress.'

Collaboration

All public safety agencies are encouraged to network with other organizations, local and outside the area, to see how others deal with issues concerning recruitment, retention, and succession and sustainability planning. Likewise, reach out to struggling organizations and share with them successful approaches to these issues. Share with each other what is working and what hasn't worked in your organization. Live, work, learn and share. One of the most critical mistakes an organization can make is to live in a self-made cocoon, avoiding outside agencies, and not interested in new and challenging experiences because it is much easier than making decisions and getting involved. These people shy away from change and continue to live in their dysfunctional world at the expense of those they supposedly lead. The world is simply moving too fast. We encourage change for the betterment of the collective EMS organizations, and certainly for their constituents.

The possibility of consolidation and organizations working together or combining is not a threat but a means to a more comprehensive and less isolated first response system that best serves our citizens. If the current system resists change, these services may be forced to change in the future on someone else's terms. After all, the only guaranteed failure of a recruitment, retention, and succession management program is the one that was never started.

Awareness

An issue was raised regarding community awareness of the services within respective communities. It was telling that some agencies make little effort to share information that allows public awareness regarding Fire and EMS agencies in terms of hours dedicated by first responders, number of personnel, credentialing hours required, necessary ongoing training hours, number and types of responses, challenges related to geography, compensation for members, automatic and mutual aid partners, cost of vehicles and equipment, needs not being met, and other statistics.

It is likely that we may be doing an excellent job with recruitment but a not-so-good job with retention, alluding to the fact that if we are training someone for a career, 'why are we not paying them to stay in our organization'. It has been noted that members stay because they want to serve the community, not necessarily because of money. It is essential to understand that one important and consistent reason that people leave organizations is because they do not feel valued. When someone volunteers, you should acknowledge them for their commitment to their community. Another perspective is that this is a topic that has changed significantly over the years. Recruiting members today require an understanding that young people today do not believe that having a job for five, ten or twenty years is necessarily reasonable. Our focus then needs to be on accepting the fact that a 3 to 5-year stint in your service is as good as its going to get in many cases.

Sometimes, it is the agency's fault that a member exits. Certainly, people leave for many reasons, but several current agencies have several long-term members. One focus may be to address the issue of sustainability and retention by addressing the provision of a full-time salaried service.

It is a fact that rural fire departments have less problem recruiting and retaining personnel in many cases. This may be simply due to the difference in roles between the two organization, or may be due to requirements, certifications, training CEU's, more call volume and scheduling parameters associated with EMS. While not exclusive, an important distinction is that EMS uses a call schedule 24/7/365. This is necessary due to increased EMS call volume. That is, when you are on call you need to be in the area, and you need to respond. In a fire department, with some exceptions, you are 'always on call', but can make the decision to respond or not to respond, at any time, specific to your

personal status at the time of the call. With EMS, you are 'absolutely' on call and must respond regardless of what you are doing. Another important consideration is call-volume. As an example, in Galena the yearly Fire/EMS ratio is routinely 1/6 on total responses.

There are three primary public safety agencies (Fire, Law Enforcement, and EMS). In terms of real need and activity, EMS equals and/or surpasses other public safety agencies in terms of 'call to legitimate engagement' ratio. We realize that this is not a contest, and that each public safety agency is significantly different from the other, but reality needs to set in when necessary. To be clear, volunteer fire departments are struggling with staffing, law enforcement agencies are struggling with staffing. EMS is struggling with staffing and heading for a certain demise if these issues is not addressed relatively soon.

Different Generations

To be successful, you must understand those with whom you work. All agencies should understand generational differences with the knowledge that a three or four generation workforce is not unreasonable. While we may tend to constantly draw conclusions about those we lead in negative terms, we should spend this time talking to them and finding out what encourages them. It IS NOT that they are 'lazy malcontents with no respect and no appreciation for the benefit of challenging work'. To the contrary, you will most likely find a fine person that wants to be effective, successful, and understood. It is simple to talk to new recruits and new members and to determine what encourages them, and how they can become an engaged member.

You will also find that the skills they bring to the table are enlightening and beneficial to any organization, and most likely skills that many do not possess. We need to appreciate that 'we were once them' and that they are the future of emergency services. This involves a level of understanding and an acknowledgement that the future has the potential to brighten up. Just because it somehow worked for us is no reason to assume that it will work for those who follow us. Another theory is that these challenges have been around for many years and we simply were not engaged enough in the process to deal with it. We are now engaged – so now we must act.

'Times, they are a' changing' (The Great and Extremely Talented Bob Dylan)

Look Outside the Lines

It is beneficial to recruit not only emergency response personnel, but personnel from non-emergency disciplines. Emergency services have multiple challenges and opportunities that are always changing. To hire only one skill set effectively eliminates those with other needed skills. There are many factors that need to be considered and it is always to the organizations advantage to have a diversely skilled workforce with several different life experiences to assist with our multifaceted organization.

Due to the dissimilar range of services currently offered, it is unlikely that any specific suggestion will serve to assist all affected agencies. When discussion centered on fire and EMS consolidation, specifically being a collaborative organization instead of two separate entities, it was noted that in municipalities that have Fire and EMS agencies that are separate, fire departments have a mutual aid or automatic aid response system in place to assist EMS and vice versa. In some jurisdictions, there is no automatic response, but Fire and EMS agencies will respond in specific situations to assist the other as a mutual aid partner.

What we need to make this work

After a year's worth of meetings and information sharing with both EMS professionals and committee members from several associated organizations and institutions, the following list addresses specific needs that will get us much closer to a more effective and sustainable countywide EMS service. These items reflect comments that are both short and long-term suggestions from Committee members and others engaged in our discussions during citizen comments. These 'needs' are presented in no specific order.

We need to acknowledge that all EMS services still standing are here due to a remarkable desire and commitment to their respective service areas, constituents, and their members.

We need to engage partner affiliates to provide opportunities for recruitment. This includes Career Technical Education (CTE), high schools, medical facilities, businesses, and trade schools, and any other category that can assist in this process.

We need to establish parameters for our best possible response within areas of the County, and to use this data to evaluate and establish more effective options in order to decrease response times in specific areas.

We need to develop a process for current, accurate, and honest EMS data and information that represents the status and performance of EMS services in Jo Daviess County. We need to have the ability to share needed data from all current Jo Daviess County EMS agencies, as well as focus on the 'real' story of EMS response times, personnel shortages, as well as current future challenges.

We need to have a serious discussion with JDC Mayors and city/town managers exposing the real challenges facing EMS in Jo Daviess County.

We need to have a serious discussion with Jo Daviess County leaders and tourism agencies to let them know that some EMS services are having difficulty responding to calls, and to ask them to consider assisting in the process of future funding.

We need to engage our Law Enforcement and Fire Department agencies with EMS responder credentials as first responders.

We need to reach out to area businesses in all county areas to encourage and assist workers who may be interested in EMS, including the provision of training funds and the ability of the trained individuals to respond to calls during the workday if necessary.

We need to connect rural EMS with local healthcare, community education, and public safety components as well as encourage crossover and the ability to function in more than one arena.

We need to develop a reasonable county-wide EMS funding plan structure that merges the current and future needs of Jo Daviess County EMS services.

We need to identify EMS as an essential service allowing us to develop a unified and non-parochial county-wide EMS oversight plan, as well as adopt local legislation to designate for EMS as an essential service at the same level as Law Enforcement and Fire Departments. This can be done internally with minimal impact until this is formally addressed at the State level.

We need to acknowledge that the current Jo Daviess County EMS system is ineffective and non-sustainable and that these issues will continue to deteriorate exponentially if no action is taken.

We need to accept that the paradigm allowing individual EMS services to fend for themselves, or to unduly rely on other agencies, is an undesirable option that serves only to make longer term matters worse.

We need to collaborate with all Jo Daviess County EMS services, as well as reach out beyond the County, when purchasing costly medical equipment such as cardiac monitors and vehicles.

We need to petition the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to recognize and focus on identifying the challenges of rural EMS and to have more accessible representation when dealing with IDPH, with previous input from our affiliates, regarding policies and rules.

We need to provide clarification and transparency with current legislation related to rural EMS agencies, specifically rules and policies put into place that helps urban-metro EMS agencies while hindering, or at the expense of rural EMS agencies.

We need to reach out to our federal and state representatives to share our story and to determine possible changes to rural EMS, including the status of EMS essential service, and government funding opportunities.

We need to develop a process where IDPH develops a preliminary process of sharing policy and rule changes with a two-month opportunity for all impacted EMS agencies to review and provide feedback prior to instituting policy measures.

We need Illinois legislators to understand the difference between urban-metro EMS (paid) and rural EMS (volunteers). It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that inconsistencies exist between municipal and rural EMS providers that creates a significant deviation in the quality of patient care. Rural providers are constantly being challenged by their own affiliates by assuming that rural services have the ability and funds to keep up with other agencies.

We need to maintain control of our respective EMS services with the caveat that there be a countywide notification, a monitoring mechanism, and an approval process.

We need to coordinate with the three (3) local EMS affiliations - MercyHealth™, SwedishAmerican® and OSF St. Anthony Hospital Medical Center. (One must wonder why a SwedishAmerican® affiliated EMT cannot assist a MercyHealth™ affiliated EMT while providing care to a patient.)

We need to pull businesses, organizations, and community groups together and establish a foundation dedicated to improving Jo Daviess County EMS.

We need to address an overriding concern that there is a need to educate the public about EMS in Jo Davies County. It is common for the general public to believe that currently there are EMS personnel at the ambulance stations 24 hours per day, 7 days per week; 365 days per year. The public must be educated so that they understand the current situation and what that situation means for their own safety and that of the general public.

We need to acknowledge that creating tax credits for first responders is nice, while it does not positively impact behavior modification or motivation.

We need to work with our State and Federal Representatives to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates for ambulance transports.

We need to share our concerns about alignment of the scope of practice standards with the national standards, which could reduce the role of, as well as alienate the rural volunteer EMS departments.

We need to respect all information provided in this effort. As our work progresses, there will be no foregone conclusions in terms of expectation.

We need to challenge the status quo and appreciate the fact that our findings will be suggestions only. We do not have the final say but may have some final sway.

We need to focus on recruiting people from different disciplines, different perspectives, and different mindsets. Reaching out beyond our normal recruitment pools is a good thing.

We need to develop desirable and/or out-of-box ways to attract and recruit new EMS members. This can be reaching out into the respective communities, including but not limited to area hospitals, clinics, schools, banks, shopping facilities, and area business groups in order to determine the best way these businesses can assist and respond to this issue.

We need to address response challenges of some Jo Daviess County EMS agencies as a means of assisting them in any way possible. The parochial 'we can handle this' has been proven unsuccessful in most EMS situations. EMS is a county-wide issue, not a local community issue. We need to work together and assist our neighbors in any way possible.

We need to investigate several long-term solutions including contracting with a private for-profit firm to provide adequate EMS response county wide with the acknowledgement that cost is a significant concern.

We need to understand that some EMS services are going to embrace our findings, and some will not. It is uncertain whether a complete buy-in is necessary.

We need to break down specific project areas and establish committees as necessary to address them.

We need to develop referral articles relating to this project. We cannot stand alone in this endeavor and will need help from many people and organizations to make this happen.

We need to provide solutions to a lack of response or a delayed response. One option presented was to implement a policy whereby another agency is paged out immediately instead of waiting for the standard five-minute tone-out followed by a three-minute tone-out.

We need to focus on recruiting members in the medical disciplines (CNA, LPN, RN etc.). They could play a significant role in filling EMT positions, and those in these professions have a desire to serve as medical providers.

We need to consider the implementation of roving two-person EMS jump-units which are non-transport units that could respond with local agencies as needed to provide additional personnel or upgrade in level of service.

We need to discuss various options including a County-wide EMS system with possible full-time and volunteer providers (paid on call) personnel. For example, these options can include up to five to seven County ambulances (based on determined service areas) each with a full-time crew of two or three people.

We need to understand that system adjustment and recommendation will be effective only if we stay engaged and determined to provide a sustainable EMS system, regardless of the challenge, the pain, and forces working against us.

We need to develop a firm, responsible, and professional relationship with local hospitals, including Midwest Medical Center in Galena which serves as the only hospital in Jo Daviess County.

We need to understand that Special Service Area (SSA) Districts represent three (3) of five (5) EMS agencies in Jo Daviess County (Elizabeth, Galena and Warren). These agencies receive funding support through the SSA's established by the County. The County Board is not legally obligated to levy a tax each year for the SSAs. For such funding support to continue, the impacted Districts must adhere to a reasonable level of cooperation.

We need to focus on core problems and solutions while regarding this issue as crucial. This impacts every citizen and visitor to Jo Daviess County. When you break it down our choices are to continue what we have been doing, provide a different model of EMS service that addresses our current shortcomings, or opt for a private ambulance service.

We need to fix this problem – The foot-dragging has gone on for twenty years too long.

And probably the most important ...

WE NEED to stay engaged, to follow up, to have meaningful discussions, to develop a work plan, and to follow through with every 'we need' item on this list until a reasonable solution is reached and we no longer have to be concerned about the status and sustainability of Emergency Medical Services in Jo Daviess County.

Jo Daviess County EMS Compensation/Benefits/# calls/yr. **(01Jan19-31Dec19)**

Elizabeth Covers 204.28 sq. mi.	All crew (Any level) All crew (Any level) Coordinator Salary	\$25.00 / Per Call \$ 2.00 / Hour On-call \$44,000 / Year
EMS Responses 327		
East Dubuque Covers 13.9 sq. mi.	1 st EMT (Report Writer) 2 nd EMT Driver	\$15.00 / Call \$12.00 / Call \$10.00 / Call \$0.00 for 'On Call' Time
EMS Responses 225		
Galena Covers 171.68 sq. mi.	Weekday Call Night / Weekend Call EMT B and Drivers EMT/I Report Stipend Coordinator Salary Administrative Assistant	\$ 3.50 / Hour \$ 3.50 / Hour \$ 7.35 / Call \$ 14.70 / Call \$ 5.00 / Call \$ 14,400 / Year \$ 3,600 / Year
EMS Responses 680		
Stockton Covers 124.98 mi.	24 /7 On Call Drivers / First Responders EMT Basic EMT I/P	\$ 2.00 / Hour \$30.00 / Call \$35.00 / Call \$40.00 / Call
EMS Responses 263		
Warren Covers 86.60 sq. mi.	Drivers EMT B & I EMT P and PHRN Coordinator Salary Coordinator Retirement Acct.	\$50.00 / Call \$55.00 / Call \$60.00 / Call \$0.00 for 'On Call' Time \$40,000/Year Match up to 3% / Year
EMS Responses 297		

2019 Total Calls – 1,778

- EMT B Emergency Medical Technician – Basic Level
- EMT-I Emergency Medical Technician – Intermediate Level
- EMT P Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic Level
- PHRN – Pre-Hospital Registered Nurse

Best Practice

During this year long process, committee members and other engaged community members identified many best practices that organizations may consider as they work to meet their sustainability needs. These are listed below. These initiatives create a sense of pride, honor and professionalism, components that work hand in hand with organizational success and which breeds members who excel in the organization.

The Foundation

- Develop and provide Mission, Vision, Value statements. Share it, Own it, and Live by it.
- Develop and provide to all members guiding documents that address by-laws, policy (Operational and Board Policy) and other procedures and protocols
- Create an environment based on service, respect, and empathy
- Create an organizational culture of empowerment and confidence
- Develop and provide an internal communication system to ensure transparency and eliminates confusion - Transparency generates trust and trust breeds cooperation
- Do not simply encourage diversity but promote diversity in words and action. Be an inclusive organization and guard against discrimination due to age, sex, race, religion or ethnicity. An organizations workforce should be reflective of those who live in our community
- Develop a hiring process that is reasonable, legally compliant and that reflects organization and function
- Develop an orientation program to ensure quality training during the probationary period. This eliminates undue expectations and nervousness
- Develop a practical challenging training program that ensures skill compliance at all levels of the organization, regardless of tenure
- Develop a mentorship program in synchronization with the probationary period to ensure objective education and training by qualified and knowledgeable members
- Develop a Classification Specification (job description) that clearly and objectively addresses the specific role and function of each member within his/her respective role
- Develop a Recognition Program as an objective means of giving credit to members who go 'above and beyond' throughout the year
- Develop an Exit Interview process. It is important to identify why a member is leaving the organization. This process may identify flaws within the organization that can be easily adjusted.
- Transformational leadership is important in all areas of recruitment, retention and succession, and termination. Strive for an organization that compels people to belong.

A Changing Environment

- Be willing to support and promote change
- Develop a comprehensive proactive recruitment program that best serves your community and your organization
- Create a brochure highlighting your organization that can be shared throughout your respective communities and communicated in your social media efforts
- Create an organizational website to be used both internally and externally
- Develop innovative and informational social media opportunities
- Share an article of interest or news regarding your agency in the local paper once per month

- Always consider how the organization may survive the next decade - put a plan in place before it is needed – review and adjust every year
- Life today seems to move faster than ever – keep up with it. If you are standing still you are moving backwards
- Mental health issues may be a barrier to retention. Provide support and resources to assist members who are struggling with behavioral health issues

Generational Considerations

- Create opportunities for potential members to volunteer with the understanding that you are aware that he/she may have less free time to offer
- Explore all options and recruit from all disciplines and all job fields
- Create opportunities to get families involved on a regular basis
- Recognize that members of newer generations may be individuals that cannot comprehend a ‘one-size fits all’ solution to problems – Make time to get to know them
- Make sure members can maintain a good work-life balance
- Job satisfaction is critical in terms of a member’s dedication, drive, and organizational promotion
- Those in charge need to look forward to the next generation of leaders in the form of a succession plan
- In a world of instant information respond quickly when a potential recruit expresses an interest in volunteering
- Realize that making rules is not the same as creating solutions
- EMS agencies with a full-time volunteer recruitment coordinator, a centralized application process and standardized policies and procedures were more successful in their recruiting efforts.
- Recognize that EMS agencies with antiquated bylaws, an application processes and a lack of immediate and coordinated response to potential recruits were less successful in their recruiting efforts.
- Recognize that EMS agencies with mentorship and leadership programs were more successful in their recruitment and retention efforts.

Keeping an Open Mind

- Do not disregard members who are on-board for just a few years or are looking to move to the career service (They can provide some worthwhile years of volunteer service before they move on, and some may even continue to volunteer on the side after getting a paid position, or return later)
- Open recruitment initiatives to neighboring communities
- Establish necessary mutual aid and automatic mutual aid agreements with nearby organizations to help meet call volume needs and adjust as necessary
- Develop a good working relationship with Law Enforcement and Fire Departments and express the need and benefit of participating in an EMR or EMT program

Measuring simple, practical and meaningful indicators of system performance

Our goal is to ensure that performance of Jo Daviess County EMS continues to be effective and robust throughout this sustainability era and into the future. This change will require measuring and monitoring components such as response reliability, response (chute) times, scene time, transport times, ED delivery times, and start-to-finish call times. This data collection process should be shared with all County EMS agencies on a 24/7/365 basis. Data retrieval specifics should be determined by EMS providers with the cooperation of the Sheriff's Office.

Barriers to healthcare access in rural areas

- Distance and Transportation - Rural populations are more likely to have to travel long distances to access healthcare services, particularly subspecialist services. This can be a significant burden in terms of travel time, cost, and time away from the workplace.
- Health Insurance Coverage - Individuals without health insurance have less access to healthcare services. A U.S. Census Bureau report, *Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, 2018*, found that the population living outside metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) without any type of health insurance was 9.1% in 2018, compared to 8.4% of the population within MSAs.
- Poor Health Literacy - Health literacy can also be a barrier to accessing healthcare. Health literacy impacts a patient's ability to understand health information and instructions from their healthcare providers. This can be especially concerning in rural communities, where lower educational levels and higher incidence of poverty often impact residents. Low health literacy can make residents reluctant to seek healthcare due to fear of or frustration related to communicating with a healthcare professional.
- Social Stigma and Privacy Issues - In rural areas, there is little anonymity; social stigma and privacy concerns are more likely to act as barriers to healthcare access. Rural residents can have concerns about seeking care for mental health, substance abuse, sexual health, pregnancy, or even common chronic illnesses due to unease or privacy concerns.
- Workforce Shortages - Healthcare workforce shortages impact healthcare access in rural communities. One measure of healthcare access is having a regular source of care, which is dependent on having an adequate healthcare workforce.

Connecting rural EMS with healthcare, community education, and public safety

EMS straddles healthcare and public safety with the ability to function in both arenas. Fire Departments and Law Enforcement are also integral to the process of saving lives. Jo Daviess County EMS must continue to explore how it might broaden its services and encourage candidates to join the EMS services. It is within reason that open minds will be able to discuss options of patient care that is significantly different from our current norm.

It is important to discussing opportunities to address care for individuals prior to unnecessary 911 calls (false alarms or situations that are not emergencies). There is a need to create new opportunities that assist EMS agencies in this endeavor with the purpose of minimizing the number of unnecessary '911' calls.

Committee Members

Dan Schleicher, Elizabeth, EMS Coordinator, Elizabeth

Mary Jo Losey, RN and Citizen Representative

Scott Toot, County Board Chairperson – Law Enforcement

Richard Robinson, Elizabeth EMS and Swedish American Hospital

Bill Hermann, Hermann Funeral Home, Stockton

Kathy Gable, Transit Director, Jo Daviess County Transit

Mike Dittmar, Mayor of Elizabeth

Scott Greene, Galena Territory Security Chief

Joe Heim, East Dubuque Fire and EMS

Tracy Bauer, Midwest Medical Center CEO

William L. Bingham,
Galena EMS Coordinator, County Board Member, Ad hoc Committee Chairperson

(We also welcomed the assistance of Sheriff Kevin Turner, Sgt. Tina Brandel, and Harlan Spiroff)

(The 'Shifting Baseline Syndrome' condition is included to partially represent and explain a possible reason why EMS in rural America is floundering across the nation. Applying the concept of 'normal' and the impact of 'subconscious expectations', we begin to accept the status quo and gradually become no longer aware of our surroundings. This sounded very familiar as I prepared this White Paper. This focuses on lowering standards within an organization without even realizing it. Becoming genuinely aware of your surroundings is critical for your ability to succeed. I hope you find this as interesting as I did.)

Shifting baseline syndrome

This is a scientific term for a phenomenon that affects almost every branch of life, but it's particularly important for those with an interest in permaculture, or those who are wondering why exactly permaculture is so important. While it may seem a bit of a complex term, or one that you'd rather leave to those with a more "technical" job, shifting baseline syndrome is a psychological construct that every individual should understand.

To put it in the simple terms, shifting baseline syndrome is basically the way in which humans, and every generation essentially, lowers its standards over the course of time. These generations are not lowering their standards on purpose, or because they have any negative goal, but simply because they don't know any better. It all occurs underneath the surface level, with most completely unaware of what's happening.

New generations assume the lack of quality that they have become familiar with is simply normal, so they no longer see the extreme damage (to just about anything, be it the environment or anything else that's declined over the ages) that someone from, say, five generations prior would be absolutely taken aback by. Expectations are lowered almost subconsciously, so the damage to the environment keeps occurring on a broader and broader scale, as damage occurs so slowly that no one even sees it, unless they were to step back and look at things over the course of multiple generations. This issue can apply to the function of workers and jobs of any type.

This sense of unconsciously damaging within the work environment can have a lasting impact of your workforce. If they are aware of it; it can create important change. This is the difference between a manager and a leader; the difference between transactional and transformational; the difference between failure and success.

This SUSTAINABILITY REPORT was provided to the Special Service Area (SSA) Board on 10/03/19

Report to Jo Daviess County

EMS Sustainability

This Ad-hoc committee, a temporary branch of the Law and Courts Committee, a branch of the Jo Daviess County Board, was established at the request of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors to address EMS issues and sustainability.

This report would not have been possible without the contributions of committee members and others interested in the process for all the right reasons. Provided was a timetable, specific EMS data, observation, discussion, and opinion.

There were several members serving on this committee although the exact number fluctuated somewhat throughout the months. All were approved by the Jo Daviess County Board. We were assisted by other representing resources that were valuable to this mission. Specific areas represented included EMS agencies that are actively participating, Citizen Representative, Sheriff's Office, Jo Daviess County Board and States Attorney's Office, Fire Departments, Chestnut Resort, Funeral Homes, Town Mayors, the Galena Territory, Jo Daviess County Transit, and Midwest Medical Center.

This is a two-part report.

Part One: We want this group to understand why we are doing what we are doing. This ad hoc committee is more than a simple start and finish ad-hoc committee because no decision, or any decision, is going to impact what we do moving forward.

Any year-long project is challenging, but the EMS sustainability challenge that faces us now is not going away and will get worse in future months and years if the status quo is maintained.

Part Two: We want this group (Reference: County Board Special Service Area Committee) to share with us any comments that may assist in the process. While we have addressed hundreds of EMS characteristics and potential options, and as we head down the final stretch, we want to be sure to address any specific issues you may have with this project. Your input is important. Ultimately, you are part of the group that will be making the tough EMS decisions in the future.

We began this process in November 2018

We intend to complete this process in November 2019

Title: Jo Daviess County (IL) County Board Ad Hoc Committee
Emergency Medical Services Sustainability
EMS Strategic Directive EMS2020

Jo Daviess County has a population of over 21,000 citizens within approximately 620 miles². The population can rise from 3,000-15,000 additional people during specific events.

From the EMS leaders to the newest EMS recruit this project is for all emergency medical service members who routinely make incredible sacrifices to ensure their communities have reliable EMS services. This report is not intended to disrupt EMS agencies or necessarily require that they deviate

from their norm. It is intended to look at the bigger picture that shows struggling EMS organizations no longer able to consistently do what their respective constituents deserve and have come to rely upon. When calls in Jo Daviess County are taking over 20 minutes to get an ambulance out the door with adequate personnel – there is a problem.

This Jo Daviess County EMS Sustainability White Paper Program segues from the 2017 Recruitment and Retention White Paper that was developed in a similar manner. During that process, we highlighted challenges with recruiting and retaining members in our volunteer EMS agencies, and shared ways to correct this issue.

This project took a closer look at many significant Emergency Medical Service issues, including highlighting the process in which EMS agencies have served their respective community in a manner that was effective 30 years ago, but may not be effective in 2020 and beyond.

(The following EMS agency information was deleted as redundant elsewhere in this report)

We have committed to reviewing and including several options that require no monetary output to the county. This includes working with local businesses, schools, etc. for recruitment and member participation, and changing the way Jo Daviess County EMS does business and moving this dynamic from parochial to participative. That said, the final report will provide several options that may require significant funding while looking at the distribution of funds for all public safety agencies in the county. We have also addressed the educational component as a means of soliciting new members to the volunteer force.

Every EMS organization in rural areas are aware of the challenge of EMS sustainability. Rural communities particularly are seeing aging population data with fewer people stepping up to volunteer. EMS agencies across the country are losing volunteers to the out-of-area career services as members seek job opportunities or simply leaving the area for better jobs. Staffing shortfalls are prevalent to a critical level in Jo Daviess County. All public safety agencies have a responsibility to be forthright and completely honest with the people in their respective communities and service areas about the many challenges they face.

There are local for-profit EMS services that are waiting at the border to pounce and take over, the emphasis going from a tax supported rural volunteer service to a for-profit enterprise. While we will include all options, we look at a private, for-profit agency as a last resort.

In addition, our participant numbers are constantly in flux for various reasons.

- People generally have less time available to volunteer now than in decades past.
- Two (or three) income households are the norm.
- In some communities, there is minimal financial support available to their local public safety organizations creating a strain when it comes to training and equipping members.

Discussing the impact of more EMS calls, longer response times, and the lack of available EMS responders, and the impact this has on meeting the core mission of any EMS organization, is vital.

This discussion may come as a shock to constituents that believe that qualified responders will be arriving quickly to effectively deal with his/her problem. In many situations this is not the case. Everyone understands that the day a person dials 911 may likely be the worst day of their life.

As discussed, there are trends that have been developing for many years that challenge the concept of volunteerism. The take-away from this is not necessarily that EMS is going away, but that first responders, those they serve, as well as city and town leaders understand the level of response capability available. Change needs to occur – some current response times cannot be justified, and for those who resist change this issue will only become more acute in the future.

The sustainability of an organization is an evolving process. It is likely that initiatives taken today will not be useful in five years. All recommendations from all public safety members should be considered an opportunity for advancement and better service to the constituents and visitors to Jo Daviess County. The bottom line is we simply do not know where EMS will reside in the future. What we do know is that we need time, input, coordination, transformational leadership and the ability to identify significant and various options in order to plan accordingly.

Sustainability is critical for any organization, including volunteer public safety. When an organization is not able to retain an adequate number of experienced and qualified personnel, it has the obvious impact of negatively affecting individuals in need and affects the mindset of responders who cannot respond for family and work reasons. Succession planning is a vital human resource tool that can assist in the process of sustainability by developing a planned structure that maintains high service levels, having adequate members on call, consistency, professionalism, and high morale.

A constant revolving door of members can have a significant impact on both the financial and human resource aspect of an organization. These include the lack of desire of members to give 100%; the development of cliques that undermine and divide organizational initiatives; lack of sense of duty; and low member morale. What is needed is quality leadership by quality personnel. This is done with an emphasis on human resources, training, camaraderie, a sense of belonging, and providing quality equipment and reasonable policies, all within a foundation of respect, trust, and responsibility.

As a practical matter, several internal projects were incorporated during this process. One was to develop a Q and A form designed to gather and share information from the respective Committee and each EMS agency in the County. This served as a tool for discussion and development purposes. We used this information to determine both the consistency and variances of the EMS agencies.

Our opportunity this evening is to ensure that we are close to being on the same page with those who initiated this report as we begin to wrap up volumes of work into one document in November 2019.

We also reached out to local community and public groups to share our initiatives and hopefully validate our findings.

Another outreach was the development of a program that provides county-wide data points to several phases of EMS response, such as call data (alarm to response, number of personnel, delays and the reasons for the delay, scheduling issues, mutual aid, automatic aid, and providing an environment where members feel welcome discussing these issues. While some individual agencies provided vast data within their respective area, the degree to which this information has been consolidated and used is questionable.

Other projects included in this process involved reaching out to our respective communities to determine what we can do better to assist our citizens and to provide a better level of education to reduce non-emergency medical responses, as well as factoring in an educational component to assist those willing to serve in EMS.

It was our initial goal to have this sustainability initiative finalized and a white paper submitted to the County Board in late November 2019 for County Board acceptance in December 2019 - a goal that we intend to keep.

Balancing the concepts of progress and tradition reflect moving forward without losing sight of the past. Progress is not about taking sides, it's about sharing opinions. A continued lack of an effective, sustainable EMS service may have a negative impact on the future of a respective service, the people they serve, and the entire community.

Other topics addressed during sustainability meetings include:

- Recognizing that the future of Jo Daviess County EMS as a local and critical issue
- Developing the capacity of local ambulance service leaders
- Facilitating collaboration between ambulance services
- Telling a simple, unified story about Jo Daviess County EMS
- Measuring simple, practical and meaningful indicators of system performance
- Connecting rural EMS with healthcare, community education, and public safety
- Addressing the shifting baseline syndrome

A CALL FOR ACTION Conclusion and Recommendation

Regardless of State Legislation we want to address that EMS is an Essential Service. This designation at the State or Federal level may be beyond our control, but this issue should be addressed at the local and county level. While we understand that this may need to be informal and non-binding it is imperative that we share this issue with the public.

Public Education serves a critical purpose within this process. It is an opportunity to inform the public of the important issues impacting EMS services and that EMS in the current form is not sustainable. We need to rely on public support for possible solutions. This education should be presented in multiple locations and numerous venues.

Oversight of current and future EMS organizations and providers is essential. The county's Special Service Area criteria has begun to address this issue. All public EMS organizations should have mandated oversight. The documentation now exists that 56 times over the past three years a call did not get appropriate response. This clearly demonstrates the need for continual oversight, without exception.

It is important that we seek additional funding. We firmly believe that additional paid positions will be needed in the future to provide efficient and effective EMS service. This would require a significant increase in budget consideration and would possibly change the dynamics of recruitment and human resource capability.

Necessary changes may serve as the catalyst for extensive reorganization of EMS in Jo Daviess County. There is simply no way to currently identify what this will look like as many pieces of many puzzles need to be addressed and measured.

Options could include (and are not limited to):

- Additional funding for local services
- Mobile jump team(s) that can assist local ambulance services
- Consolidation of local EMS Services
- Contracting out County EMS to a private provider
- A County-wide EMS Service
- Other options not yet defined or addressed

The one clear and defining recommendation is to use this document in a positive way that clearly addresses the challenges we face regarding Emergency Medical Services in Jo Daviess County. This is far too important to put this report on a shelf and hope for the best. This panel has stepped up to discuss an extremely challenging issue, one in which few of our citizens (and none of our visitors) are aware. When ambulances are not able to respond to a call due to a lack of personnel, when it takes a considerable amount of time to get an ambulance rolling with a crew, when 'page' to 'response' times are bumping up on 20 or 30 minutes, it is time to avoid making this crisis even worse.

Legal Disclaimer

The Ad-Hoc Committee for EMS Sustainability, a committee of the Jo Daviess County Board of Supervisors recognize that many laws and regulations at the local, state, and federal levels relate to employment and other human resource initiatives. This document cannot account for every law or regulation in place within a given law enforcement, fire or emergency medical service agency. It is advised that any organization effort to endorse an EMS sustainability initiative seek review from qualified legal counsel to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations. Some useful websites to guide agencies considering modifying existing human resource policy include:

United States Department of Labor: <https://www.dol.gov>

National Labor Relations Board: <https://www.nlr.gov>

State of Illinois Employment Relations Board: <https://www.illinois.gov.ilrb>

International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)

The Florida Fire Chief's Emergency Services Leadership Institute (ESLI)

This document is based on limited data and research and is not a scientific or technical study. Specifically, the assessment was limited by several factors, including a shortage of reliable quantitative data, incomplete data reporting, lack of participation in some cases, the lack of a statewide EMS performance tracking systems, and limited time and resources. The assessment primarily focuses on the challenges facing Jo Daviess County Emergency Medical Services and used minimal surveys which did not include a broad survey of residents, EMS providers or healthcare providers.

We need to realize that disruption is the new norm. There are several issues that must be addressed to move EMS forward in Jo Daviess County. Our job is not changing - Change is our job. We need to be willing to dance the dance and to change our own behavior. The voice of change does not have to be disrespectful, but it cannot be silent. Every aspect of healthcare has begun to learn new dances. This includes Emergency Medical Services. As we lead our EMS organizations with determination, we must emphasize the need for transformational leadership, organizational growth, appropriate funding, and sustained quality patient care. This initiative may engage and/or impact every resident and visitor in Jo Daviess County.

'Our intent is not to change history. To the contrary, our intent is to change the future. Achieving these goals will require the deliberate actions of all stakeholders at every level in every Jo Daviess County community. The future of effective and sustainable emergency medical service is now in the hands of many. This report has concluded.' WLB

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