

***Vermont Regional EMS Coordination Study  
Executive Meeting Notes  
Regional Stakeholder Meeting  
Chester Ambulance, Chester VT  
October 2, 2023***

This meeting began at 7pm, with 27 stakeholders in attendance, and opened with remarks from Travis Howe, founder and CEO of Emergency Management Matters. A background of the Vermont Regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS) coordination study was given by Mr. Howe, and it was explained that while there would be ample opportunity for open-floor comments, the focus would be on the following objectives, which are listed within the contract.

- Issues related to costs of service, cost effectiveness of various current service models, and cost-effective alternative service models.
- Existing funding models and identify long-term sustainable funding strategies.
- Challenges and opportunities related to local and regional emergency response coordination.
- EMS district structure, authority, duties, and the number of districts.

The following key points, concerns and possible solutions were highlighted by the stakeholders present:

- Non-paying calls, such as patient refusals are increasing, which has a negative impact on budgets. Additionally, it was noted that behavioral and mental health and other non-medical-emergent calls are increasing, with many patients not enrolled in government insurance programs. This too hurts EMS' bottom line. It was further noted that the State does not have mental health facility beds readily available.
- There was a lengthy discussion regarding the 911 system, which was described as "broken" by one attendee. EMS seems to be the "catch-all" when 911 users do not need medical care, leaving services and crews with few options on how to handle. This brought forth discussion about the need for other "buckets" that calls can be placed in, other than fire, police and EMS. Attendees also discussed the need for alternative destinations for EMS, as well as the impact on provider well-being, in that the mental health crisis is impacting their desire to work in EMS.

- Attendees, including a Town Manager indicated a need for more public education surrounding EMS. There seems to be a disconnect between EMS, town government and citizens in terms of knowledge about what EMS does and what the costs are. One town official indicated he is not sure there is an appetite for citizens to pay more for EMS.
- Struggles surrounding inter-facility transports were discussed. There seems to be a lack of resources and coordination.
- It was noted that EMS workforce numbers are the same as they were in the late 1980's, and EMS education is the backbone of the system.
- We heard from Chester Ambulance and the Town of Chester - they are addressing staffing issues with EMS, law enforcement and fire by having cross-trained employees.
- Money allocated to EMS education has helped services and they wish for long-term funding for this area.
- EMS Districts were discussed and it was noted that some services operate in multiple districts and must keep track of various modifications to protocols, as well as individual DMA-issues policies. This particular district is not very active due to having few transporting services.
- District Medical Advisors were discussed and it was agreed there must be equality in regards to activity levels, pay, etc.