

Statewide Development Plan: Background and Users Guide

The Pennsylvania Emergency Medical Services Act was enacted in 1985 to prevent premature death and reduce the suffering and disability that arise from critical illness and injuries. This Act authorized the Department of Health to develop and implement the emergency medical services (EMS) program and authorized the Department to plan for the EMS program.

Formal emergency medical services systems in the United States have been developing for about a generation. The first 30 years focused on building the infrastructure and attending to the basics of system operation. Leaders across the nation realized a few years ago that the time had come to plan the direction for the next generation of EMS. With the support of the National Highway Traffic Safety Association and the Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, a national consensus document, the *EMS Agenda for the Future*, was produced.

In Pennsylvania, a steering committee used this model to develop a draft plan for review and statewide comment. A series of town meetings were held throughout the Commonwealth to solicit recommendations. The statewide advisory council reviewed the draft and endorsed it. Numerous agencies such as the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the state Fire Commissioner's Office, injury prevention organizations and EMS advocates for children shared ideas for inclusion in the plan. Through this public process, Pennsylvania updated the Statewide EMS Development Plan.

The plan is divided into 15 categories each with goals and objectives. Specific actions to support the goals and objectives of each category are identified by each EMS region as well as the Department of Health's EMS Office. (Note that the summary document includes only the goals and objectives. For task information, see regional EMS plans and the EMS Office plan). In this way, the activities can be tailored to the scope of responsibilities and the unique needs of regions, while maintaining a forward momentum of mutually agreed upon direction.

In many ways, the process of planning was as important as the plan itself. For the first time, the Department of Health in partnership with the statewide advisory council, Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council, went to regional and community levels to actively seek provider and consumer recommendations. This joint effort is coordinated with the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) which is using a similar process.

The Statewide EMS Development Plan embraces the concept of emergency medical services as part of the health care continuum and as a citizen safety net during this period of major change in health care delivery. Improvements in technology are incorporated to seize opportunities for improving education of personnel, enhancing communication throughout the system and applying innovative techniques for patient care. Continuous quality improvement is embedded in every part of the plan to assure that the system strives to improve upon the sound foundation built over the last thirty years. Each year, through the statewide advisory council, a forum for discussion and update of the plan will occur.