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To: All EMS Professionals
From: Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Section

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Mutual Aid Agreements vs. Coverage Agreements

It is *required* that all 9-1-1 transporting services be able to ensure coverage 24/7, either through their own staff or via an agreement with a neighboring service. Therefore, when an EMS service identifies in advance that it will not have adequate staffing to cover 9-1-1 calls, it is important that the EMS service establish a written agreement with a neighboring ambulance service to ensure coverage.

A **coverage agreement** is defined in Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 110.04 (15) as “a written agreement between two neighboring ambulance service providers that each will cover the other's 9-1-1 area when the other knows in advance that it will be unable to do so.”

There have been situations recently in which an EMS service has called for mutual aid despite knowing in advance that it had insufficient staffing to cover 9-1-1 calls. A **mutual aid agreement** is defined in Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 110.04 (40) as “a written agreement between licensed ambulance service providers whereby each provides emergency medical care in the other's primary service area when the primary ambulance service provider requires additional resources *because it has already committed all its resources to other 9-1-1 emergency responses.*” Therefore, an EMS service that uses mutual aid to cover its 9-1-1 coverage area when its service has not committed all its resources is in violation of Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 110. It is strongly recommended that any service that has identified staffing issues that will affect its ability to provide coverage should develop and maintain approved coverage agreements.

Whenever two EMS services develop a written agreement with one another, they should submit it to the EMS Office for approval, as well as update their operational plans. At any time that such agreements change, it is likewise important that those changes are also reported to the EMS Office for approval.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the EMS Office by calling 608-266-1568 or email dhsemssmail@dhs.wisconsin.gov.