

Washington Update April 15, 2004

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1. Legislation Threatens EMSC Program

Legislation, H.R. 3999, introduced by Rep. Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), Rep Gene Green (D-TX), Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-OH, and Rep. Jim Greenwood (R-PA), to reauthorize the federal trauma care grants program, includes language that would eliminate the national Emergency Medical Services for Children program (EMSC). The bill strikes section 1910 of Title XIX of the Public Health Service Act, which is the authorizing language for EMSC. Although H.R. 3999 includes language to allow trauma care grant funds for children, among several other activities, history has made clear that unless EMSC has distinct and dedicated authority and support, children's emergency medical needs will go unmet. The AAP and other pediatric organizations are lobbying against this section of the bill. They are calling on all stakeholders in EMSC to educate legislators about the importance of EMSC and the consequences to EMSC if this new bill were to be enacted as currently written. To find out more and send a letter to your representative, visit http://capwiz.com/aap3/mail/oneclick_compose/?alertid=5533696.

2. NASEMSD Conducting Member Satisfaction Survey

The National Association of State EMS Directors (NASEMSD) has retained an independent firm, Research USA, to conduct a member satisfaction survey of NASEMSD. Members will be contacted by telephone in the next few weeks to provide their opinions, so that NASEMSD staff and officers can better meet needs. It is important that each member take up to 10 minutes to complete this survey so that the study accurately represents the opinions of all of the members. Answers are anonymous and will be used for statistical purposes only. Should you have any questions, please contact: NASEMSD Treasurer Jay Bradshaw, (207) 287-3953, or Executive Director Beth Armstrong, (703) 538-1799 x5.

3. NASEMSD Provides Recommendations to DHS

NASEMSD, on April 2, 2004, provided input on potential additional Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) actions to address EMS funding barriers. In a letter, NASEMSD provided eight suggestions. Among the suggestions were: creation of a full-time position within ODP to address EMS issues; education for the EMS community on ways to secure funding for EMS; education of State Administrative Agents on EMS needs, priorities, and the current status of funds distribution; and education of state-level

officials nationwide on the importance of EMS as a component of terrorism preparedness. Complete information is available from Beth Armstrong at Armstrong@nasemsd.org.

4. NASEMSD Contributed to the Safecom Statement of Requirements Documents

NASEMSD helped develop and vet the public safety Statement of Requirements (SoR) version 1.0, which was released to the public at the IWCE Conference in Las Vegas, on March 24, 2004. This document will allow the Safecom program to develop a roadmap to guide future research and development, and testing and evaluation of wireless communications solutions. The SoR will also be used to inform policymakers and industry of the public safety community's needs by providing them with a well-conceived requirements document. Information about NASEMSD's involvement in this project is available by contacting Program Advisor Kevin K. McGinnis, MPS, EMT-P, at mcginnis@nasemsd.org.

5. DHS to Implement the Homeland Secure Data Network

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security on April 12, 2004, announced a contract to initiate the implementation of the Homeland Secure Data Network (HSDN). The HSDN will provide DHS officials with a modern IT infrastructure for securely communicating classified information. When completed, the HSDN will be a private, certified, and accredited network that will fully support the mission goals of the department. Northrop Grumman was selected to design, implement, and operate the HSDN.

6. FCC Taking Comments on "Broadband over Power Lines"

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is accepting comments until May 3 on "Broadband over Power Lines" (BPL). BPL is a technology that allows power companies to transmit signals over power lines in order to offer broadband access (mostly Internet) particularly in rural areas. BPL can cause telecommunications interference within as much as a mile of power lines that are carrying broadband transmission. This interference primarily affects the "High Frequency" spectrum where amateur radio operators work and could cause difficulties in disaster plans that employ amateur radio operators to back up communications. NASEMSD will be submitting comments. Other that want to submit comments may learn more through several sources. One source, <http://www.arri.org/tis/info/HTML/plc/bpl-deployment.html>, is a primer on BPL and the FCC rule issue. Another source, <http://www.arri.org/news/stories/2004/03/24/3/?nc=1>, provides more discussion on the issue and provides directions for submitting comments to the FCC electronically. Finally, the FCC Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is found at http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6515783486.

7. ORHP To Release Two Guidance Sets in May

The Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) is releasing two guidance sets on or about May 10, 2004, for new projects. The projects include the Public Access Defibrillator Program and the Rural EMS Training and Equipment Assistance Program. Because these are relatively small programs, there will be a pre-application process from May 10-June 10, 2004 and a final application process for those selected. The final deadline will be July 30, 2004. For more information, contact Evan Mayfield at Emayfield@hrsa.gov.

8. CMS Increases Payments to Rural and Small Urban Hospitals

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) March 31, 2004, implemented several provisions of the new Medicare law that will improve payment rates for rural and urban hospitals in areas with fewer than 1 million population, beginning with discharges on or after April 1, 2004. Taken together, the provisions will increase payments to the affected hospitals by nearly \$12 billion over the next ten years. In addition, as a result of these changes, the outlier threshold for all hospitals to be eligible for extra payments for unusually costly cases will decrease from \$31,000 to \$30,150. Complete information is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/media/press/release.asp?Counter=994>.

9. TOPOFF 3 Exercise Scheduled by DHS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that the next Congressionally-mandated Top Officials (TOPOFF) exercise would take place in April 2005. Scenarios in the exercise will take place in Connecticut and New Jersey. Additional TOPOFF activities will be conducted within the United Kingdom as part of a partnership to strengthen security in both nations. TOPOFF 3 is the third of the congressionally directed, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) national exercise series. TOPOFF 3 will use a series of exercise activities of increasing complexity, and will simulate a terrorist WMD campaign with simulated attacks occurring in Connecticut and New Jersey. The specific scenarios for the exercise are still being developed.

10. Kentucky Wireless Interoperability Legislation Passes

A bill (House Bill 226) requiring the chief information officer to establish and implement a statewide public safety interoperability plan has been signed into law by Kentucky's governor. According to *Government Technology*, the plan must include the development of required architecture and standards to ensure that new or upgraded public safety systems will interoperate. For a copy of the bill, visit <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/RECORD/04RS/HB226.htm>.

11. Deadline for Heroes Awards Nominations Extended to April 30, 2004

The EMSC National Heroes Award Program was established in 1998 by the Health Resources Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) to recognize and reward outstanding achievement in emergency medical services to children (EMSC) and to encourage continued excellence in the field. The award categories provide an opportunity to honor individuals, state teams, and organizations dedicated to advancing the purposes of the EMSC Program. The categories for the awards are: EMSC Project Coordinator of Distinction Award; EMSC Provider Leadership Award; EMSC Family Member Volunteer of the Year; EMSC Community Partnership Award; Outstanding EMSC Research Project Award; and State EMSC Policymaker of Distinction Award. Awards will be presented during the 2004 Annual EMSC Grantee Meeting, June 28-30, 2004, in Washington, D.C. The deadline for nominations has been extended until April 30, 2004. For more information, contact Shirley Nahabedian at (202) 884-6890 or email snahabedian@emscnrc.com.

12. AHRQ Awards EMS-Oriented Grant

Henry E. Wang, MD, MPH, has been awarded a five-year K08 mentored clinical scientist development grant in the amount of \$620,000 from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Dr. Wang's proposed patient safety investigation involves the evaluation of out-of-hospital endotracheal intubation errors and their linkages to in-hospital outcomes and course of care. This is apparently one of the first EMS-oriented career development grants ever awarded through AHRQ or the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Wang is assistant professor in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. He can be contacted at wanghe@upmc.edu.

13. Final IOM Smallpox Committee Meeting Held in March

The fifth and final meeting of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee on Smallpox Vaccination Program Implementation was held in Washington, D.C., on March 29, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was to assess the state of the science and knowledge base available for developing disaster scenarios for preparedness exercises. ASTHO Executive Director Dr. George Hardy presented the state public health perspective to the committee. A summary of his remarks and a link to the full remarks is available at <http://www.astho.org/newsletter/newsletters/5/display.php?u=Jmk9NSZwPTgyJnM9NjM2>.

14. Pneumococcal Vaccine Shortages Persist

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the supply of Pneumococcal 7-valent Conjugate Vaccine will be insufficient to meet the national need at least through July 2004. The CDC, in consultation with the AAFP, AAP, and the ACIP, recommends temporarily discontinuing administration of the third and fourth dose of the PCV7 (except for children at increased risk for severe disease) until the supply problem is alleviated. The CDC also announced that it will be allocating additional vaccine to the 12 states with increased American Indian and Alaska Native populations, who have higher rates of pneumococcal disease. For additional information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/>.

15. ASTHO Hill Day a Success

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) held its annual Hill Day this year on March 11, 2004. Twenty-two State Health Officials were in Washington, D.C., to meet their congressional leaders and discuss current issues facing public health. Immunization was once again voted as one of ASTHO's top legislative priorities for this year, along with preparedness, chronic disease, and Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funding. Informational material used during the Hill Day visits is available on the ASTHO Web site at <http://www.astho.org>.

16. ASTHO's HIPAA Task Team Conference Call Held in March

On March 19, 2004, ASTHO's HIPAA Task Team held a conference call to address the question, "How does HIPAA impact syndromic surveillance efforts and what tools are needed to ensure these activities can be pursued unencumbered by HIPAA. Three speakers participated: James Hodge, Jr., executive director, Center for Law and the Public's Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Dick Melton, deputy director, Utah Department of Health; and Jerry Gibson, state epidemiologist, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. ASTHO is developing an issue brief. For more information, contact ASTHO's Samata Kodollikar, MPH, at skodollikar@astho.org.

17. Upcoming Events (denotes event is newly added)**

Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services Spring Accreditation Seminar, April 28, 2004, Orleans Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Information is available at <http://www.caas.org/>.

American Telemedicine Association 9th Annual Meeting and Exposition, May 2-5, 2004, Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, Fla. Information is available at www.americantelemed.org.

**Navigator 2004 Emergency Dispatch Conference & Expo, May 2-7, 2004, Las Vegas, Nev. Information is available at <http://www.emergencydispatch.org/NAVIGATOR/index.html>.

**National EMS Week, May 16-22, 2004.

Optimizing Emergency Department Management, May 24-25, 2004, The Wyndham Tremont, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

Rural-Frontier EMS Summit, May 26, 2004, San Diego, Calif. Held in conjunction with the NRHA Convention. Information is available at <http://www.nrharural.org/EMSagenda/> or contact EliBriggs@NRHArural.org.

Hospital Emergency Management Strategies, May 26-27, 2004, Tremont Hotel, Boston, Mass. Information is available at <http://www.worldrg.com/>.

2004 Defense Medical R & D and Procurement Conference, June 21-23, 2004, Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, Md. Information is available at <http://www.marketaccess.org/MEDCONF.asp>.

NASEMSD Mid-Year Meeting, June 26-27, 2004, Washington, DC. Program and registration details are available at <http://www.nasemsd.org/>.

The 2004 Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Meeting : “Highway Safety – Priority 1.0”, Sept. 25-29, 2004, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii. Information is available at <http://www.ghsa.org>.

ASTHO 2004 Annual Meeting: “Communication, Cooperation, Coordination – Building Bridges in Public Health”, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, 2004, St. Paul, Minn. Information is available at <http://www.astho.org/>.

Drive for Live, 2004 MADD National Conference, Sept. 29-Oct. 3, 2004, Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center, Grapevine, Texas. Information is available at <http://www.madd.org/>.

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The Washington Update is supported by a cooperative agreement between NASEMSD and HRSA's Maternal and Child Health Bureau's Partnership in Communication. Feel free to share this publication with your colleagues.

NASEMSD Washington Update is published two times a month by e-mail for association members and partners. Comments should be directed to the editor, Dawn M. Shiley at dshiley@asmii.net.

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