

New Mexico

PHHS Block Grant Provides Life Support for New Mexico's Rural EMS System

Producing Results

The New Mexico Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system, supported by PHHS Block Grant funds, was able to leverage significant funding from state, private, and other federal organizations to ensure the continuation of EMS statewide, allowing the system to remain an available public health and safety service resource essential to all rural and frontier communities, tribes, and municipalities.

Public Health Problem

The vastness of rural New Mexico means solitude and tranquility to some, but to others it can mean at least an hour-long trip to a hospital in a medical emergency. Responding quickly and competently requires that the volunteers who make up nearly 80 percent of New Mexico's rural emergency medical responders must have access to state-of-the-art training and equipment. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is the only health care service that is universally available to all of New Mexico's 1.9 million residents regardless of ability to pay. New Mexico's three regional EMS offices each cover a geographic area about the size of Kentucky. The only Level 1 trauma center (certified to handle all types of medical emergencies) is in Albuquerque, a 4- to 5-hour drive from some locations in the state.

Taking Action

The New Mexico Department of Health's EMS system is as an essential public health and safety service that has become an integral and valued part of life in all rural and frontier communities, tribes, and municipalities throughout the state. The state's system has been recognized nationally for many valued progressive enhancements: some EMS personnel provide child car seat installations and make home-safety visits to new parents; EMS units sponsor bicycle helmet rodeos and organize farm safety programs; EMS personnel can also participate in public health immunization programs and a new program for stroke prevention and early intervention, along with other public health prevention and preparedness activities.

Implications and Impact

New Mexico's investment of PHHS Block Grant funding has allowed the state health department to generate significant state, private, and other federal funds to support EMS statewide. Every year, the New Mexico Department of Health's Bureau of Emergency Medical Services:

- Examines, licenses, and provides regular continuing education to more than 7,000 First Responders, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Emergency Medical Dispatchers.
- Inspects, certifies, regulates, and supports about 400 municipal and county EMS services, 19 air ambulance services, and 70 public dispatch agencies.
- Supports three regional EMS offices that provide first-line support, technical assistance, specialized training, and innovative programs.