



Winter 2023

Siren

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To champion the leadership, advocacy, education, and tools that empower California's private ambulance and mobile healthcare services to provide people-centered EMS systems and standards. The CAAs overarching role is to provide support for those who care for their communities.

CAA Mission

Be a recognized voice, advocate, and authority of best practices for ambulance providers throughout California.

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Circulation among California's private ambulance providers, elected officials and EMSA administrators.



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President's Message

Jaison Chand
President
California Ambulance Association

First, I would like to say I was honored to be elected President of the California Ambulance Association (CAA). I've been an active member of the association for over 25 years, and I'm looking forward to the coming year. My background is with a small company on the north coast, City Ambulance of Eureka, Inc., where I've worked for 29 years. I'm currently a Regional Director for Global Medical Response and oversee our Air and Ground ambulance transportation in Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake and Shasta Counties, to include City Ambulance of Eureka.

I would like to thank outgoing President, Jimmy Pierson for an outstanding two years at the head of the CAA. Increased involvement by member organizations and one of our most successful legislative years are a result of Jimmy's strong leadership.

Reflecting on the last twelve months, we can be proud of what we accomplished. We started the year with a cost collection workshop and a series of content creation events in both Northern and Southern California. Our members showed up in mass to our press conferences and key legislative hearings, and it clearly had an impact, as we were able to stop or amend legislation that could have been very costly to the industry.

We had outstanding representation at the EMSAAC Conference, of which we were a sponsor. Our two keystone events, the

Stars of Life in Sacramento and Annual Convention in Tahoe, were successful by every metric. We saw a record number of both Stars of Life in 2023 and at the Annual Conference. As we head into 2024, planning is already underway. We want to continue the delivery of quality education, workshops and conferences.

2023 was the strongest legislative year in the history of the CAA. This is described in detail in the Legislative section, but I would like to thank the Legislative Committee, our lobbyists, the Board of Directors and the many members who "showed up" this year. Going forward, we will not

be content. We have considerably more to do, and we remain focused on Medi-Cal reimbursement and our interfacility transport providers.

I would like to encourage everyone to attend our town halls, leadership development programs, webinars, conferences and other mediums for member engagement. The strength of the association has been the solid participation in all of the above, and the ability to share information and ideas is our foundation. *

2024, here we come!
Jaison Chand



CAA Membership is a Business Essential

The business environment, the healthcare sector and the EMS industry are evolving at an ever-increasing pace. At the CAA we are dedicated to providing members with the essential tools, information, resources, and solutions to help your organization grow and prosper. And, the CAA's collective efforts on statewide legislative and regulatory issues are not possible without strong membership support and engagement.

Take your place in California's statewide ambulance leadership

Membership not only saves you money on CAA events and resources, but also keeps you up to date on trends, innovations, and regulatory changes through:

- Leadership on statewide legislative and regulatory issues
- Targeted conferences & educational programs
- Member-only updates and alerts
- Member-only discounts & access to expert resources
- Opportunities to exchange ideas with your colleagues statewide



Join the California Ambulance Association

Go to www.the-caa.org/join-the-caa for a membership application.



Executive Director's Report

Rob Lawrence
Executive Director
California Ambulance Association

As we come to the end of another year, we have a lot to celebrate and reflect on. A dedicated board of directors, solid, well attended committees, led by committed chairs, and a remarkable legislative season. Much of this will be highlighted by President Chand in his foreword and by the *Siren* committee report outs.

As we go into 2024, we are already mapping out events and planning their delivery. Early into the new year we will call for you all to nominate your Stars of Life to attend the event, taking place in Sacramento March 19-20 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel. As our Stars brochure always states, "The CAA's Annual Stars of Life Celebration is the most exciting state event that recognizes and honors the dedicated

professionals in the ambulance services industry. We strongly encourage every ambulance company to nominate at least one employee to be a Star of Life. Your participation ensures wonderful memories for your employees, makes them feel valued and respected, gives your company precious local exposure and recognition for your ambulance operation, and helps to educate and influence legislators on issues important to our industry."

Also mark your 2024 calendars for the Annual Convention September 17-20, 2024. We will be back at the Westin, Anaheim, which received excellent reviews for its convention location, conference space, accommodation and local (Disney!) amenities. While September seems a long, long way off, budgets should be

set to include this amazing learning and networking event.

Finally, as well as being the Executive Director of the CAA, I also have the honor to chair the State Association Committee of the American Ambulance Association and 2023 saw the inaugural State Association Conference, held in Niagara Falls New York. The purpose of both conference and committee is to share best practice and information between state ambulance associations. Because of the success of the CAA and its programs and legislative successes, we have certainly been purveyors of best practice and we have both offered and received guidance and best practice from other state members.

Staying with AAA, I would like to offer our collective congratulations to CAA immediate Past President, Jimmy Pierson on his election for the Board of the American Ambulance Association, Jimmy will serve a three-year term representing AAA Region 5 (essentially the states of the West Coast of America) and will sit alongside Region 5 Director, also CAA member, Paul Main of American Ambulance, Visalia. Collectively CAA members contribute positively to not only local legislation but have a hand in the furtherance of national ambulance and EMS issues also.

That's it for 2023, thank you all for your support to the CAA, here's to an equally successful 2024. *



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The California Ambulance Association is now welcoming non-members to subscribe to the *Siren* magazine. Published quarterly, the *Siren* is a comprehensive source of information on issues that are important to the ambulance industry. Contents include feature articles, association educational and networking events, legislative updates and analysis, member news and much more.





The A-B-C's of Media Relations

Communications LAB

In today's fast-paced world of 24-hour news, ambulance industry leaders should be prepared to address the media at a moment's notice. Being well-prepared when a reporter knocks on your door will allow you to tell your story and maintain a positive image for your organization. How do you prepare?

Media Relations is all about the A-B-C's.



Answer the question

While you can't decide WHAT is asked, you can choose HOW to respond, and that's where the art of answering questions comes into play. First, let's discuss why you must answer the question. When you find yourself in front of a media outlet, whether it's television, print or online, you have an opportunity to connect with a broad audience. If you fail to answer the question, you risk losing credibility, which is critical in a field that relies on public trust.

Now, how do you answer? One effective technique to master is the use of "hooks." Hooks are statements or phrases that not only answer the question but also pique the interviewer's interest.

How the hook works:

- **Engage with the question:** Start by directly addressing the question.

This shows that you're attentive and respectful of the interviewer's inquiry.

- **After providing a straightforward response, include a brief teaser or detail about your background or message.** Teasers should be concise but compelling.
- **The key to hooks is to make the interviewer want to know more about you or your organization.** The teaser should naturally lead to a follow-up question for which you have a good response.

If you're asked about a recent negative trend in the ambulance industry, for example, you might respond:

"That's an interesting question. All trends are worth examining, and the latest one is no exception. From my perspective, what we really need to focus on is the innovative approach that some ambulance companies

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are taking to adapt. For instance, we're using this data to improve our response times."

It's important to steer the conversation towards topics for which you have strong, well-prepared answers.

Bridge to Your Messaging

Bridging is the art of seamlessly redirecting a conversation back to your intended message. It's a technique that can help you maintain control and clarity when faced with off-topic or challenging questions.

Imagine you're in the middle of a live television interview and the reporter suddenly asks a question that threatens to veer you off course. This is where bridging comes into play, allowing you to navigate the conversation back to your central message.

Here are some bridging phrases to keep in your mental toolkit:

- **"What I can tell you is..."** This phrase is your trusty companion when you need to pivot back to your central message. It signals to the audience that you're about to share meaningful insights.
- **"What you should know is..."** Use this phrase to convey key information or facts that the audience must understand. It reinforces your expertise and guides the conversation in the direction you want it to take.
- **"That's an excellent question, but if I could just finish my thought..."** Sometimes, a question might be valid but not aligned with your message. Politely acknowledge the question's merit and assert your need to complete your point. This will help you maintain control of the narrative.

Remember that the goal is not to evade questions but rather to stay on course and deliver your message.

Communicate Your Story

It's important to tell your story as much as possible. But how do you ensure that your story shines? The answer lies in the art of pivoting, staying composed, and utilizing strategic phrases to tell your story.

- **It's not a race** – When you get an unexpected or difficult question, take a moment to breathe and collect your thoughts. It's perfectly acceptable to pace yourself and gather your ideas before responding. Phrases like "That's a great question" or "I hear that a lot" can serve as your allies, giving you time to think.
- **Stay on message** – Utilize bridging statements or pivoting phrases such as "The facts are," "What you should know is," or "Let's deal in reality." These

statements can serve as powerful tools to refocus on your message.

- **Flag important points** – Use phrases like "Let me make this perfectly clear" or "Here's the bottom line" to signal that you're about to share important information. This ensures the audience knows that something significant will follow.
- **Highlight key takeaways** – Phrases like "The most important thing to remember is" can help underscore the message you want the audience to remember.

Telling your story effectively to the media is essentially about control, composure, and clear communication. By following the A-B-C's of Media Relations, you can strike a balance between addressing inquiries and resonating with audiences so they remember you well beyond the interview. ✱



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UNVEILING EXCELLENCE: The CAASE Awards Celebrating Ambulance Industry Triumphs

Rob Lawrence
Executive Director
California Ambulance Association



The CAASE (California Ambulance Association Showcase of Excellence) Award shines as a beacon of recognition and achievement. This prestigious accolade not only celebrates accomplishments but also shapes the future of the profession.

The CAASE Award is a platform for showcasing CAA member company's achievements and best practices, setting a high standard for excellence in the industry.

The award offers industry-wide exposure, sharing knowledge and best practices on the CAA website, enhancing industry professionalism. Recognition extends to community-level, with award winners

given the CAASE Award Winner logo for online and marketing use. The CAASE Award is more than just an accolade; it's a testament to dedication and innovation that benefits the entire ambulance industry in California.

Members apply for any of the four award categories in the CAASE awards program, as follows:

- * Employee Programs
- * Community Impact Program (open to any community-based program)
- * Innovation in EMS
- * Clinical Outcome Project

In 2023, the entries and winners were:

EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS

- * **Safety-365 – Lifeline EMS (Winner)**
- * Medic Ambulance – Now Introducing, Blink! Employee Program
- * Royal Ambulance – Career Bridge Program

Winning Entry: Safety-365 – Lifeline EMS



The Safety-365 project, initiated in late 2022, emerged as a response to the growing concerns surrounding workplace accidents, injuries, and illnesses. Spearheaded by the Safety Committee and Performance Improvement Department, the project aimed to usher in a proactive approach to safety management that transcended traditional methods. Recognizing the

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limitations of isolated safety initiatives, Safety-365 integrated existing programs, protocols, and campaigns into a comprehensive framework that spans the entire year. By Spring 2023, the project was well-defined, backed by a clear strategy, robust network, and a roadmap for execution. The ultimate goal was to reduce employee injuries, foster a culture of safety consciousness, and create a lasting impact on workplace safety.

Safety-365 set out with an array of ambitious goals. The primary focus was on reducing employee injuries, illnesses, and risks through a preventative approach. The program aimed to enhance safety reporting, recognizing, and celebrating safety ambassadors. A comprehensive safety program was developed to encompass various domains, including workplace safety, road safety, situational awareness, and emergency preparedness. The integration of existing safety programs, coupled with fostering a culture of safety awareness and proactive measures, became paramount. Regular risk assessments, targeted risk mitigation strategies, and data-driven improvements were also integral to the project's implementation. Collaboration with industry experts, communication, and awareness campaigns rounded out the program's multi-faceted approach.

The planning process, spanning 90 days, involved a comprehensive safety audit, policy review, and digital transformation. Real-time access to safety-related data was enabled through electronic systems. The launch phase included sharing knowledge gained from the audit and research, emphasizing that safety is a continuous effort. Over nine months, Safety-365 achieved remarkable results. Preventable injuries decreased to zero, and non-preventable injuries decreased by 47%, while revenue impact was significantly positive. Furthermore, vehicle contacts were reduced by 23%, reflecting the program's effectiveness in enhancing road safety. Safety-365's impact extended to fostering a safety-conscious culture and promoting psychological safety among employees.

The Safety-365 project has proven to be a transformative force in workplace safety management. Its comprehensive and proactive approach, along with a commitment to continuous improvement, has yielded tangible and sustainable results. The program's integration of existing initiatives, coupled with training opportunities and robust communication, has garnered employee engagement and active participation. The positive feedback and quantifiable outcomes reinforce Safety-365's success in driving down injuries, promoting safety awareness, and cultivating a lasting culture of safety consciousness.

Medic Ambulance – Now Introducing, Blink! Employee Program

The Medic Ambulance's employee program, known as Blink, has brought about a transformative shift in internal communication and team dynamics. Rolled out in 2023, Blink is an application designed to connect the company's frontline workers, enabling them to engage with each other and align with the broader mission of Medic Ambulance. This report delves into the comprehensive journey of introducing and implementing Blink, with a focus on its profound impact on the organization.

Blink's implementation was driven by a set of strategic goals. It aimed to establish a robust and easily accessible communication channel across all levels of the company, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. By introducing this platform, Medic Ambulance aimed to uplift employee morale and cultivate a strong team-building ethos, nurturing a collaborative environment. Additionally, the program sought to provide employees with increased access to essential resources, including the COACHES program and the Employee Assistance Program, while also enhancing the dissemination of time-sensitive information.

The planning and implementation of Blink followed a meticulous approach,

structured across several phases. Executives familiarized themselves with the software, followed by a management trial period to fine-tune features and content. Integration of Field Training Officers (FTOs) provided valuable feedback before the full-scale launch of Blink. This comprehensive process was underpinned by a total launch strategy, combining management input, educational videos, and informative posters. The results have been remarkable, with an overwhelming majority of registered employees actively engaging with the platform, showcasing the substantial impact Blink has had on transforming Medic Ambulance's internal communication landscape.

Royal Ambulance – Career Bridge Program

Royal Ambulance has redefined its mission, recognizing that the well-being of its team is paramount in delivering exceptional healthcare services. Amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Royal Ambulance embraced a transformative perspective, understanding the need to support those who care for others. This shift led to the creation of the Career Bridge Program, designed to nurture the personal and professional growth of its young, distributed team of over 650 members. By identifying and fostering career goals, building strategic partnerships, and offering tailored training experiences, the program aims to elevate Royal Ambulance's team members into the next generation of healthcare leaders.

The Career Bridge Program's inception emerged from a deep understanding that prioritizing employee growth is integral to organizational success. Royal Ambulance recognized that its role transcends patient care to encompass cultivating a culture of support for its team members. The program's goals are multifaceted, focusing on individual goal identification, partnership establishment with culturally aligned healthcare organizations, and customizing training experiences to

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ensure seamless transitions to the next stage of their careers. By mapping out a 12-month career journey divided into three phases, Royal Ambulance empowers team members to envision and realize their professional aspirations.

The project's implementation process involved an in-depth analysis of team member ambitions, with 43% aspiring to acute health settings and 40% seeking first responder roles. By collaborating with partner agencies, Royal Ambulance developed a structured program, which includes phases of learning, specialized training, and firsthand experience. The program's impact has been evident through its success in preparing its first cohort for roles in partner organizations. With a Net Promoter Score of 69, reflecting the likelihood of team members recommending the program, Royal Ambulance is actively driving growth, retention, and development while fostering a culture of trust, respect, and opportunity.

COMMUNITY IMPACT PROGRAM

✱ **Medic Ambulance –
Homebound COVID-19
Vaccination Initiative (Winner)**

✱ **AMR –
Earn While You Learn**

Winning Entry:
**Medic Ambulance –
Homebound COVID-19
Vaccination Initiative**



The program highlights Medic Ambulance's successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic by actively

contributing to the administration of COVID-19 vaccines in Solano County. With a particular focus on high-risk, immobile, and homebound patients, Medic Ambulance collaborated effectively with various agencies, including Solano County EMS, Solano County Public Health, and the California Health Medical Reserve Corps. This collaboration facilitated the organization and execution of more than 1,300 COVID-19 vaccine clinics since December 2020. The initiative aimed to address the needs of non-ambulatory citizens and those unable to attend conventional vaccine clinics throughout the pandemic.

In March 2022, Solano County and Medic Ambulance responded to a State of California request to address a six-month backlog of potential patients seeking COVID-19 vaccinations. Within just four weeks, the combined efforts of Solano County and Medic Ambulance successfully cleared the backlog, and the partnership continued to proactively plan and execute various vaccine events. These events ranged from individual in-home vaccinations to larger mass vaccine clinics held at venues like the Solano Town Center, ultimately leading to significant positive outcomes.

The impact of this initiative has been substantial. As of March 23, 2023, an impressive 81% of Solano County residents have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The project successfully addressed the needs of over seven hundred homebound patients, while also administering more than 5,700 vaccines through pop-up clinics and mass vaccination events. This concerted effort underscores the meaningful role played by Medic Ambulance and its partners in ensuring widespread vaccine coverage and contributing to the overall health and well-being of the community.

**AMR –
Earn While You Learn**

In recognition of the tight-knit EMS community's generational ties and

the underrepresentation of minorities in the field, the Earn While You Learn (EWYL) Program was conceived in 2019. Traditionally, EMS recruitment has been driven by existing networks, resulting in a workforce that doesn't mirror the communities it serves. Financial barriers and the extensive training needed for EMT certification further limited diversity and entry. The EWYL Program aimed to break these barriers by providing income during training and opening doors to underrepresented populations.

The program's dual objectives were to eliminate the financial constraints to EMS entry and foster diverse careers in the field. Planning began in 2019, with the first cohort starting in Alameda County in February 2022. The innovative curriculum integrated job orientation and training, strategically weaving skill development and real-world scenarios. Participants hailed from a variety of backgrounds, including foster care system graduates, and were evaluated using FISDAP assessment prior to the program to predict future success. The results have been highly promising, with dozens of successful EMT and Paramedic graduates now contributing to various AMR operations across California.

The impact of the EWYL program has been substantial, facilitating a more inclusive workforce composition that aligns better with the communities served. The program's reach has extended throughout California, successfully overcoming financial barriers, and fostering a more diverse and representative EMS workforce. The program's budget included training expenses and wages, tailored to provide both practical training and individualized learning plans for participants. As the EWYL program continues to flourish and evolve, it represents a crucial step forward in making the EMS field more accessible, diverse, and impactful.

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INNOVATION IN EMS

- * **Clive Savacool / LogRX – Digital Narcotics Tracking (Joint Winner)**
- * **AMR – EMS Career Pathways Apprenticeship Program (Joint Winner)**
- * **Lifeline EMS – Law Enforcement Applicant Development**

Joint Winning Entry: Clive Savacool / LogRX – Digital Narcotics Tracking



LogRx's pioneering initiative addresses a long-standing issue in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) – the normalization of deviance in narcotics management. Historically, EMS agencies have relied on rudimentary pen-and-paper systems to track potent medications, disregarding the gravity of narcotics managing in a high-stress field prone to both PTSD and substance abuse. Recognizing this critical lapse, LogRx embarked on a transformative journey in 2022 to reshape how narcotics are monitored in EMS. By offering an easily accessible program that prioritizes accountability, training, and user support, LogRx aims to instill a culture of vigilance while reducing waste, theft, and inefficiency.

LogRx's primary objective is to disrupt conventional attitudes toward narcotics tracking in EMS. With an understanding that employees mirror the level of care shown by management, LogRx's CEO, Clive Savacool, set out to provide an innovative

solution that raises accountability. Through a comprehensive approach that integrates cutting-edge technology, partnerships, and personalized user experiences, LogRx seeks to empower EMS professionals to manage narcotics more effectively. Equipping them with an intuitive, mobile-friendly application that incorporates biometrics, GPS tracking, and real-time reporting, LogRx ensures robust narcotics accountability.

The project's three-year journey involved meticulous planning and continuous improvement. LogRx started with a small seed fund of \$20,000 and expanded gradually, investing incoming revenue back into development. The program evolved through iterative design, incorporating

ease of use, accessibility, and holistic support as cornerstones. The culmination of this effort is evident in the program's success. With a rapidly growing user base of nearly 5,000 daily users from around the world, LogRx has significantly elevated narcotics accountability in EMS. Its success is reflected not only in user satisfaction but also in the remarkable statistic that none of the nearly 100 customers has canceled their service.

LogRx's impact extends beyond efficient narcotics tracking. It has led to streamlined agency audits, reduced staff hours, and a more robust approach to handling-

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controlled substances. By providing a comprehensive, user-friendly solution, LogRx is transforming EMS practices and behaviors for the better. This innovative approach, backed by a commitment to customer support and continuous enhancement, has positioned LogRx as a catalyst for positive change in the EMS industry.

Joint Winning Entry

AMR – EMS Career Pathways Apprenticeship Program



Recognizing the long-standing challenges in paramedic staffing within the EMS field and the exacerbated shortage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, American Medical Response (AMR) embarked on a pioneering initiative to address these issues. The EMS Career Pathways Apprenticeship Program, developed collaboratively with industry experts, aimed to create a sustainable and innovative solution to the paramedic shortage. This program was designed to provide aspiring EMS practitioners with immersive learning experience, industry-leading mentorship, and a clear pathway to a successful career in emergency medical services.

The project's primary goal was to develop and gain approval for a Paramedic Apprenticeship program, making AMR the exclusive employer in this groundbreaking initiative. The program aimed to offer a unique learning experience by combining theoretical knowledge with practical scenarios, providing apprentices with the skills and expertise needed to excel in high-pressure EMS environments. Industry experts were consulted to design the curriculum, which integrated EMT

training, paramedic training, and flight medic training to create a comprehensive educational journey. The program's differentiators included unparalleled learning experiences, mentorship by seasoned EMS practitioners, and a clear career progression plan.

The planning and implementation phase spanned several years, starting with discussions in 2019 about potential solutions for healthcare staffing shortages. Drafting training standards based on Title 22 and national registry standards was a meticulous process involving collaboration between AMR, educational institutions, government bodies, and industry representatives. Federal Department of Labor approval was received in October 2022, with California Department of Apprenticeship Standards approval expected soon. The impact of this program is anticipated to be profound, revolutionizing paramedic training, addressing staffing shortages, and elevating the EMS field's overall standards.

While there was no specific budget allocated for the program, the profound implications of the EMS Career Pathways Apprenticeship Program for California's EMS staffing and the attention it has garnered from Workforce Development Boards underscore the program's potential to reshape the future of the EMS industry.

Lifeline EMS – Law Enforcement Applicant Development

In response to the projected increase in demand for police and detectives in the coming years, LifeLine-EMS, a forward-thinking EMS agency in Southern California, initiated the Law Enforcement Applicant Development (LEAD) program in September 2022. This innovative program was designed to bridge the gap between emergency medical services and law enforcement careers, recognizing the valuable role of EMS in law enforcement response. Developed in collaboration with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), LEAD offers aspiring law enforcement

officers hands-on EMS experience, tactical training, and a unique competitive advantage in the LAPD hiring process.

The LEAD program was driven by a set of clear goals: to recruit candidates in the LAPD application process, provide comprehensive educational support for LAPD applicants, facilitate the transition of EMTs into law enforcement careers with enhanced skills, reduce attrition during the LAPD background process, and offer a parallel career option for candidates who don't yet meet LAPD requirements. The program planning took nearly a year, marked by collaborative efforts between LAPD and LifeLine-EMS, thorough marketing campaigns, recruitment drives, and careful participant selection.

As of July 2023, the LEAD program has successfully launched its inaugural cohort, with plans to transition participants to the LAPD workforce around the nine-month mark. Though it's still in its early stages, the program has garnered positive feedback and fostered a renewed sense of belief and enthusiasm among participants. The innovative approach of LEAD, combining EMS and Law Enforcement training, has the potential to create well-rounded professionals capable of addressing the complex challenges of modern emergency response. While the program continues to evolve, its impact on individuals' career goals and organizational success is evident, promising a brighter future for both participants and the communities they serve. *





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LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE:

Battling Bullying in the EMS Field

Danielle Thomas
Chief Operating Officer
LifeLine EMS

Over the course of my career, I have handled, managed, led, screwed up, conquered, and coached many a colleague and team members when they felt badly about a situation. I know that I have left work ... a few times ... at a 2-out-of-10 on the "I love my job scale." With so much focus on the leadership mindset to cultivate, grow, and protect a more ideal and inclusive culture, I now wonder, who protects the leaders?

For me it started day two here at my new gig. I moved 3,000 miles from my home to take on a new challenge. The fear, the excitement, every feeling imaginable was present. I resigned from my previous role, I posted on LinkedIn, and I boarded Jet Blue. What was next to come? I attended orientation to experience things from my boots on the ground, from the ground up. I appreciated the anxiety present in the educators. This wasn't an undercover boss scenario; I had met them when I interviewed. I tried everything in my power to lower the stress in the air, everything I could to provide more comfort and not exude, "be nervous, be nervous, I'm judging you." In fact, I was not. I was proud to be in my new role at this new place. It was almost a fresh start. I could create first impressions and was excited to do so.

I posted on LinkedIn on the second day of orientation. A picture of an almond bar that the organization put in a logoed wrapper. Something they started doing

during the COVID-19 pandemic when it was difficult for EMTs to have access to food appropriately here in LA. It was chock full of things that would kill me, but nonetheless I celebrated the thought and effort, and the culture it symbolized – we care about you and your wellbeing. I was proud of the patch on my arm.



Over the past 14 months, we have celebrated each other a lot. The major accomplishments and the small wins. The complicated patients with a great outcome and the operational challenges that were overcome. I am not only a Paramedic, but my profession and role are part of

who I am. I celebrate that as best as I see fit, sometimes on my personal pages, Instagram, the book, LinkedIn. Sometimes I celebrate through company channels that I will then share to promote and gain exposure for all we can give to potentially inspire others in the industry. Like I am inspired by all of you.

Soon after I posted the almond bar of death with its cute wrapper, my post was screenshot by a former colleague that I had worked with in the past on the east coast. I didn't see his post at first but was soon alerted by a leadership team member that my post was making its way around Facebook, poking fun, and shaming me for spending money on snack bars when other items needed more attention, like new ambulances. I was shamed for working at the wrong company, in the wrong position, in the wrong part of the country. Out of context much?

I wondered, if someone had come to me and was upset about something like this, what advice would I give? I'm pretty sure I have given advice mimicking, "it doesn't matter" or "nobody cares," or my favorite, "it's lonely at the top." But I was annoyed, upset, bothered by a misconception, my reputation potentially being dragged across an outdated platform that a whole 26 people started to comment on. Why would I even give this a second thought?

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The answer is simple. If you can reach out and engage with someone and ask why, you can learn something. So, I did. I messaged them: "Hi, hope all is well. I'm curious as to why you screen shot my post and spread misinformation. If you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer them. I'm just confused and thought I'd ask why? I work in California now."

Within the 48 seconds that it took for the respondent to formulate a plan, the post was down, an apology was sent explaining the misconception and the closing sentence got to me: "No one has ever asked me why before."

I thoughtfully paused and chose not to respond. Then I opened messenger again and did: "Sometimes the why matters. In fact, most of the time it can help others truly understand motivation and how to lead better." He simply closed out the conversation with, "I'm Sorry," and justifying his why. I felt triumphant. It wasn't about the win. It was about the engagement; it was about the connection that day – that this bully would think twice next time. Well, maybe he would. I had pride for the patch on my arm.

So, fast forward and nearly a year goes by. My heart and mind have been shattered a million times a day by misaligned EMSers who would rather not go the extra mile, are not good kind humans, or just don't care for the mission, vision, and values as much as I do. And that's ok. I have dealt with bullies and meanies and managed them out, as those behaviors are not tolerated here. We have a "no jerk policy." Whatever your definition of "a jerk" is, you know it when you see it. I have seen it. I have lifted up others when they have not been strong enough on their own to handle the cruelty that is the EMS world. I have disagreed with others who felt they were being bullied with unreasonable expectations, and I have ensured that I adopted a very important thought process: "Others cannot make me feel a certain way, only I can allow myself to feel any way." That sentiment has helped me in my professional career. It stops making me the center of attention and allows us to focus on the business

and get our jobs done in an amazing way. You may subscribe to the "trust battery theory" or use the "MRI – Most Reasonable Interpretation" method. All of these used in simultaneity creates resilience and allow leaders to focus on the big picture.

The past few months, as I continue to have pride in the patch on my arm or celebrate things in my personal life, I have been targeted on social media. Instagram trolls who clearly know of me are trying to make me look bad. They have blossomed into delivering a litany of comments on my posts. Insulting me, committing acts of slander, and trying to ruin my reputation. I delete the comments, block the user, only to have another fake account to pop up the next day.

So, what would I tell a mentee, what advice would I give. I self-coached and counseled with a 1% interest in conquering this challenge. Not because I'm crying in the corner, the opposite. It's a challenge that may affect any one of us. Should I care? Does it influence others? Do these awful insults and untruths change the trajectory of my career? The answers are all unknown in this no-win situation. What are the options:

1. Take down social media or don't post, who cares anyway, right?
2. Just ignore it and keep deleting the comments, you're not that important anyway, right?
3. Write an open letter to the committer of these egregious personal crimes, because you'll feel better and move on.
4. And so many more.

I have been bullied several times throughout my life. Maybe you can empathize. I have been bullied for being a redhead with curly hair, being Jewish, being tall, being older than most paramedics when I started, getting a promotion, being a girl, having an opinion, trying to succeed, studying hard, and eating breadsticks from France at school lunch in 5th grade. We see online bullying impacting teenagers that are tragically

taking their own lives because they feel awful about themselves. We see people with low self-esteem believing what the bullies say. We see leaders turning a blind eye and tolerating this behavior because if they do something about it, that EMT might quit, and they are short staffed.

This article is how I handled this situation.

It won't stop, it may not stop, I'm not sure. I know I can handle it, because maybe you're right, nobody cares. But here is the thing, you need to care. If you are a leader in an organization that employs humans, you are required to care. EMS leaders must care. You cannot be truly proud of the patch on your arm if your organization doesn't stand for kindness and integrity. Luckily mine does. If you witness, hear of, or investigate actual acts of bullying or harassment, you must handle and have that crucial conversation of accountability.

If one leader or up-and-coming leader handles something differently tomorrow because of this article, that is the win.

Most of us are proud of their patch. Most leaders want others to be proud. To whomever is thinking about our accomplishments so highly that you need to harshly sabotage the good out there, this one's for you. There, I feel better. I feel better because I care. I feel better because when people say, "nobody cares," I proudly can say, "I Do."

So, who protects the leaders?

As the California Ambulance Association promotes our "Ready Next" Series, I can't encourage owners, executives, directors etc. to promote this series and encourage your management team and up and coming leaders to participate. Having meaningful conversations and not just checking the box of EMS life, is critical to success of EMS organizations moving forward. Become a leader, we got you!

Join me in December for Ready Next Session, "Don't just check the box in EMS Leadership, Actually Care." Please register online at <https://www.the-caa.org/> *

Legislative and Agency Relations Committee



Carol Meyer
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This year, the California Ambulance Association (CAA) had its most successful legislative session to date with two sponsored bills signed into law, in addition to other legislative victories. All bills become effective January 1, 2024.

SPONSORED

AB 902 (Rodriguez):

This bill clarifies that the owner or operator of a toll facility is required to enter into an agreement for the use of a toll facility upon the request of a private or public local emergency service provider. *This bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom on July 27, 2023.*

AB 902 Implementation: Several companies have already begun meeting with toll agencies in their area. In Los Angeles, the toll company has provided a contract and policies. Each company will be required to sign the contract, provide Standard Operating Procedures and a list of license plates for each CHP approved vehicle (no transponders will be necessary

and vehicles will be exempt). Companies working in more than one county will be required to address each jurisdiction separately and exemptions, policies and contracts may be different but they are required by AN 902 to negotiate with the ambulance industry for exemptions.

AB 1376 (Carrillo):

This bill states that a private ambulance provider, and employees of that provider, when operating in accordance with the standards, regulations, policies, and protocols of local emergency medical services agencies, shall not be criminally or civilly liable for the continued detainment of a person when that detainment is requested by a peace officer, facility staff, or other professionals authorized to detain persons. *This bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 8th, 2023.*

AB 1376 Implementation: The CAA is seeking legal analysis for implementation of this bill and the Operations Committee will be developing *Best Practices* on implementation of AB 1376 to include for example, restraining procedures.

BILLS OF INTEREST

AB 40 (Rodriguez):

This bill requires the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) to adopt emergency regulations to develop an electronic signature for use between emergency department and emergency medical personnel, a statewide 30-minute standard for patient offload times (90% of the time), and an audit tool to improve the accuracy of such data. *This bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 13th, 2023.*

AB 40 Implementation: Entities that are required to implement a variety of mandates in this bill are the California EMS Authority, the local EMS agencies and the hospitals.

AB 716 (Boerner):

This bill limits the amount a health plan enrollee, insured, or uninsured person who receives services from a ground ambulance provider has to pay for services, prohibits the ground

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ambulance provider from billing more than a specified amount, and requires the health plan or insurer to directly reimburse a ground ambulance provider according to established or approved amounts. *This bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 8th, 2023.*

AB 716 Implementation: This is a critical bill for the ambulance industry, eliminating balanced billing almost exclusively and requiring insurance companies to pay at the locally approved rate. Again, the CAA is seeking legal analysis in two parts – 1) processes working with the local EMS agencies on getting rate approval, and 2) a toolkit of notifications to the insurers when payment is not received at the approved rate as per AB 716. The Payer Issues committee will be discussing this over the months at meetings and through CAA webinars. Refer to Donna Hankin's article in this Siren for more detail.

SB 525 (Durazo):

This bill (1) enacts a phased in multi-tiered statewide minimum wage schedule for health care workers employed by covered healthcare facilities; (2) requires, following the phased-in wage increases, the minimum wage for health care workers employed by covered healthcare facilities to be adjusted; (3) provides a temporary waiver of wage increases under specified circumstances; (4) and establishes a 10-year moratorium on wage ordinances, regulations, or administrative actions for covered health care facility employees. *This bill was signed into law by Governor Newsom on October 13th, 2023.*

SB 716 Implementation: The CAA successfully negotiated a carve out with the author and sponsors of the bill exempting the ambulance industry from the required wage increases. ✨



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PAYER ISSUES: Your 2024 Money

Doug Wolfberg
PWW Advisory Group
CAA Medicare Consultants

In this closing column for 2023, we're going to look at some of the coming Medicare and reimbursement changes and how to navigate them successfully to protect your ambulance service's bottom line for 2024.

First, the annual Medicare Ambulance Inflation Factor (AIF) was announced by CMS for dates of service starting January 1, 2024. The 2024 AIF is 2.6%. This is a substantial reduction from the 2023 AIF of 8.7%, but at the same time, the rate of inflation has come down significantly from where we were a year ago. Overall purchasing power of a dollar is stronger compared to where it was at the end of 2022.

With the annual Medicare inflation adjustment, there are a few additional issues that you should be mindful of. In past years, on occasion, MACs have incorrectly processed the AIF update files, resulting in underpayment in some cases and overpayments in others. Be sure when your RCM staff is reviewing and posting payments that they are attentive to actual vs. expected remittance amounts. Overpayments must be refunded within 60 days, even if it was completely the MAC's error. Underpayments will need to be tracked and reported, but it's generally best not to instantly refile or appeal small underpayments. In the past these have been automatically reprocessed by the MACs without the need for intervention from the provider's billing office. Larger underpayments may require more action.

Another important consideration when rates change at the start of the year is to ensure that

other payers whose rates are tied to Medicare are aware of the AIF and make the proper adjustments to your payments starting January 1. For instance, if you are non-contracted with a Medicare Advantage plan, payments for covered services need to be consistent with the Medicare Part B payment amounts, less, of course, the plan's applicable beneficiary cost-sharing amounts. Annual inflation adjustments aren't always as automatically implemented by some payers as they are with Part B MACs, so be attentive to this. If your company is contracted, then the agreement governs your payment amounts, so be attuned to any automatic escalator clauses that may be contained in your contracts.

Another change that comes with the new year is the Part B annual deductible. For 2024, the Medicare deductible on the fee-for-service side is \$240 (up from \$226 in 2023). Be sure to optimize your deductible management by practicing "right day" billing, i.e., leveraging billing technology to minimize the chances that your balance ends up in a self-pay bucket.

2024 will also see the early demise of ET3 – the CMS Emergency Triage, Treat and Transport pilot program. Although originally this program – in which Medicare experimented with the uncoupling of reimbursement from ambulance transport – was supposed to continue through 2025, CMS pulled the plug two years early due to "lower than anticipated" utilization of the ET3 model. Even though the termination of ET3 is an industry setback, individual ambulance companies can still

negotiate with commercial payers, facilities and others to bring these alternative service delivery models to non-Medicare patients.

Another issue to keep on your reimbursement radar is the scheduled expiration of the temporary Medicare add-on bonuses of 2% (for transports that originate in urban areas), 3% (for transports originating in rural areas) and 22.6% (for transports originating in super rural areas). While the current law keeps these bonuses in place throughout 2024, remember that the renewal of these bonuses depends on Congressional action. So stay tuned to further CAA communications, and when your state and national associations urge you to communicate with your members of Congress, be sure to make your voice heard.

Finally, the end of the pandemic means that something called the Medicaid "continuous enrollment" requirement has expired. This means that states have until June 2024 to complete re-enrollment reviews and to disenroll from Medicaid those recipients that no longer meet eligibility requirements. Some disenrollments may be for technical reasons, meaning that some may re-enroll shortly after disenrollment. The point is that Medi-Cal eligibility (and eligibility in other state Medicaid programs) may be a moving target for a period of time. Eligibility verification and insurance discovery will be more important than ever to your revenue cycle in 2024.

Happy 2024! I wish you all the best for billing success and a prosperous New Year! *

AB 716 Quick Notes

Donna Hankins
Chair, CAA Payer Issues Committee

On Sunday 10/8/2023 Governor Newsome signed into law AB 716 which hopes to end “Surprise Billing” for ambulance services in California. The consumer friendly bill has multiple layers of changes to protect consumers from high ambulance bills.

Below is a brief summary of changes that will impact ambulance providers (with the section references from the bill found here: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB716)

- Collection Agencies can no longer use wage garnishments or liens on primary residences to collect ambulance payments [section 2, 1376.56 (c) (2), section 4, 1797.233 (b)(3)]
- A hardship policy for uninsured or self-pay patients for Medi-Cal or Medicare allowed’s has been created [section 4, 1797.233 (a) and (b)].
- The state will collect and maintain a database of ambulance provider rates in California [section 3, 1797.124 (a) and (b)].
- Insurances must treat non contracted ambulance claims as “in-network” for purposes of processing

the claim [Section 2, 1371.56(b) and Section 5, 10126.66 (b)]

- When processing the claim, commercial insurances regulated by the state of California (DMCH or CDI agencies) must pay non contracted ambulance claims with either:
 - The rate established or approved by local government [Section 2, 13716.56 (d)(1)(A) and Section 5, 10126.66(d)(1)(A)]
 - OR if NO established rate approved by local government, a rate determine using the “Gould Criteria” [Section 2, 13176.56 (d)(1)(B) and Section 5, 10126.66(d)(1)(B)]

You might be wondering “What is the Gould Criteria?”. In California, two insurance regulatory agencies exists: DMHC and CDI. The DMHC has regulation existing referred to as the “Gould Criteria” that requires insurances to evaluate claims based on six criteria [Section 1300.71 (a)(3)(B) of Title 28 of the California Code of Regulations]. The CDI did not have that language. AB 716 reference DMHC’s Gould criteria in Section 2 and mirrored that language for CDI in Section 5. Those six criteria are:

- (i) The ambulance provider’s training, qualifications, and length of time in practice.
- (ii) The nature of the services provided.
- (iii) The fees usually charged by the ambulance provider.
- (iv) Prevailing ground ambulance provider rates charged in the general geographic areas in which the services were rendered.
- (v) Other aspects of the economics of the ambulance provider’s practice that are relevant.
- (vi) Any unusual circumstances in the case.

If you do not have rate regulations for your claims and the insurance does not apply the Gould standards, the expectation is that you can appeal to the insurance to utilize the Gould standard and be able to utilize the state resource of rates in your area.

The CAA encourages all providers to read the language of AB716, and begin to make action plans for the upcoming changes to the Ambulance Reimbursement landscape. Our payer issues committee will be working to develop information and training for our members to for this change to ambulance reimbursement in California. ✱

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