EMS Recruitment and Retention

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EMS Recruitment

- Do we have a staffing crisis?
- Are we short nationally with licensed providers? Or are providers choosing to work outside of EMS?
- Is there something deeper happening?
Publication: Recruitment and Retention: A Perennial Problem in EMS

- 1000 EMT’s were polled: 33% indicated they planned to leave EMS within 5 years. 50% of the respondents were planning to retire.

- Those not retiring gave the following reasons for their plan to leave EMS:
  - 1. A desire for career change
  - 2. Family issues
  - 3. Organizational issues
  - 4. Working hours
  - 5. Job stress
  - 6. Pay and benefits
EMS in 2005 vs. 2019 (Private, not for profit)

- Competitive hiring, multiple interviews, vetting.
- Company positions were coveted
- Benefits were more robust
- Pay rate was roughly the same
- Educational requirements were less robust
- Call volume was 1/3 of what it is today
- Agencies were numerous and smaller in size
- Less of an inter-facility transfer mindset and focus
- CP/MIH did not exist yet
News Article: AAA study sets a benchmark for turnover in the EMS industry

- The EMS industry has a higher turnover rate than other occupations according to a recent study completed by the AAA.

- The study found a higher turnover rate in private sector agencies when compared to public sector.

- A 25% turnover rate means 100% turnover every 4 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Unweighted Average Turnover</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time EMT</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time EMT</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full-time Paramedic</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Paramedic</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>15%</td>
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EMS Recruitment

• What matters to your candidates?
  • A user friendly application and recruiting system with open communication and follow through
  • Free education; paid EMT and paramedic programs, paid professional development, paid continuing education.
  • Mentorship programs.
  • Your story. Do they know your mission statement? What’s the story you tell? Do you tell it well?
  • Word of mouth
  • Leadership being open to innovation/change
  • Your already hired walking representatives. What story do they tell? What image do they present?
• Pay and benefits
Rural EMS Recruitment

- Do rural EMS systems require different recruitment tactics?

- Yes, there are unique challenges for rural EMS systems. These can include:
  - Differing shift scheduling needs, do your employees drive 2-3 hours to get to work?
  - Access to EMS training and education. Are there programs in place throughout your state within reach for rural communities?
  - Attracting talent to rural areas.
  - Community EMS Volunteers. Paid? Collaboration with local businesses to ensure availability.
What attracts talent to your organization?
EMS Retention

- Now that you’ve hired talent how do you keep talent?
- It’s time to take another look at the reasons listed in the previous slide as our workforce’s EMS exit plan: retirement, career change, family issues, organizational issues, working hours, job stress, and pay and benefits.
- As an industry can’t we work to remedy some of these?
Addressing the Reasons Behind the EMS Career Exit Plan

1. Retirement * fixed
2. Career change * why?
3. Family issues * work related?
4. Organizational issues * can be addressed
5. Working hours * can be addressed
6. Job stress * can be mitigated
7. Pay and Benefits * can be addressed
My Own Research

• Platform used: social media

• Question raised: What do you believe our biggest challenges are when it comes to recruitment and retention? What do you believe is driving our EMS recruitment and retention issues?

• The response form EMS providers was astounding....
My Own Research

- The employees that commented were not complainers, they were the rock stars.
- Many out of fear inboxed me.
- We have an unhappy work force.
- Most feel overworked and under appreciated.
- Many of the comments had an over arching theme of: poor compensation, lack of mentorship, organizational issues that included: uncontrolled call volume, lack of compassion for personnel, lack of respect from within their organization, and an overall lack of structure within the organization.
- Reading the commentary truly bothered me......we have to address these issues.
EMS Retention

• The data speaks for itself we’re not retaining our talent

• What can we do?

• There needs to be an open dialogue with collaboration among EMS professionals at all levels

• It’s time to innovate and work together
Publication: 4 steps to improving EMS retention with onboarding

• 1. Hire qualified applicants
• 2. Overhaul the interview and hiring process, think efficiency
• 3. Enhance preceptor development
• 4. Raise the quality of orientation

* onboarding a new employee costs ~ 10-20K!
EMS Retention: Things to consider

- Do you hire for talent or to fill seats?
- Are you vetting candidates?
- Are you shying away from employee accountability because of your staffing crisis?
- Do your new hires enter your organization with a structured field training program? Are your FTO’s your front line leaders? Are they paid and trained accordingly? Do you offer mentorship?
- Are you afraid to ask personnel for their feedback?
- Are your employees afraid to give feedback?
- Is there upward mobility within your organization? Are there opportunities to gain additional training, certifications, and progress as an EMS professional within your agency?
EMS Retention: Things to Consider (Rural Agencies)

• How are you compensating and/or rewarding your volunteer staff?

• Are they able to work and volunteer with your agency? Is their employer supportive of their volunteer work with your agency?

• Are there opportunities for volunteers to participate in company activities? Attend continuing education offerings?

• Volunteer mentorship?
EMS Retention: Leadership Considerations

- Great leadership will cause poor employees to leave causing a temporarily spike in turnover that will then normalize. Engagement and morale will increase.

- Poor leadership will retain poor employees and cause talent to bleed continuously. Turnover will remain elevated. Engagement and morale will decrease.

- Leadership is the cornerstone of retention!

Great leaders are willing to sacrifice the numbers to save the people. Poor leaders sacrifice the people to save the numbers.

-Simon Sinek
EMS Retention: Leadership Considerations

• When promoting an EMS provider into a leadership position consider this: An exceptional paramedic does not necessarily make for an exceptional EMS agency leader.

• Our job as providers is very autonomous. Independence and self reliance are common traits.

• Transitioning someone into a leadership role requires vetting and training. A good leader should be a good communicator, possess characteristics of emotional intelligence (empathy and compassion), be self aware enough to understand their own biases, and truly care for people.

• “If leadership is poor at the top it will be poor through and through.”
What does the future hold for EMS?

- The national bureau of labor and statistics projects 15% growth in EMS from 2016-2026.

- EMS Agenda 2050 sets out to make EMS people centered. The agenda aspires to improve the quality of patient care as well as the quality of providers work environment.

- Today EMS providers are a hot commodity. They pick and choose who they work for.

- We have no choice, we MUST begin to innovate. Our work force has spoken.
What are your plans for improving recruitment and retention?
Bibliography

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• How to Recruit, Engage, and Retain EMT’s and Paramedics, EMS1.com 2017

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• EMS Agenda 2050, NHTSA

• Recruitment and Retention: Overcoming the Rural EMS Dilemma, Rural Information Hub, 2018