



Pennsylvania Department of Health

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Shapiro Administration Announces New Statewide Recruitment Initiative to Boost EMS Workforce

The Department of Health is collaborating with the Commonwealth's 13 regional EMS councils to increase the number of first responders across the state.



Altoona, PA – Ahead of EMS Week (May 18-24), **Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Executive Deputy Secretary Kristen Rodack** yesterday visited AMED Authority EMS station to launch a new statewide initiative to attract and recruit Pennsylvanians to the emergency medical services field.

The Department will partner with all 13 Pennsylvania regional EMS councils to host career days offering opportunities to speak with local EMS responders and learn more about the role through on-site activities. To assist in the effort, **Governor Josh Shapiro's [2025-2026 budget proposal](#)** adds \$6 million more per year for the next three years to the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund, which would be disbursed through the regional EMS councils to local stations for activities such as recruitment and retention programs.

"Providing 24-hour access to emergency care is no easy feat because every call for help has unique circumstances and many EMS services are stretched thin," said **Executive Deputy**

Secretary Kristen Rodack. “We need to work together to create a pipeline of Pennsylvanians who want to serve their communities as EMS professionals.”

The first two kick-off events will be held on Sunday, May 18, in Blair and Mercer counties.

In Blair County, Southern Allegheny EMS (SAEMS) Regional Council will sponsor an “EMS Night” baseball game with the Altoona Curve at the Peoples Natural Gas Field Stadium, beginning at 6:00 PM. The event will include a virtual simulator where people can experience the reality of responding to an emergency call. Tickets are available for purchase on [SAEMS's website](#).

In Mercer County, DOH Deputy Secretary for Health Preparedness and Community Protection Dr. Wendy Braund will join leaders from Superior Ambulance Service for a career day event featuring an EMS documentary screening of *Honorable But Broken: EMS in Crisis* at 1:00 PM at Grove City High School. The screening will shed light on the impact and dedication EMS workers bring to their communities across the Commonwealth. The event runs until 4:30 PM, including an opportunity to step into an ambulance, meet and greet first responders, and learn about EMS career opportunities. Registration is not required.

More than 1,200 Pennsylvania emergency medical service agencies responded to a total of approximately 2.4 million emergency calls in 2024.

This statewide workforce recruitment initiative will support EMS agencies by providing more staff to cover areas currently without ambulance coverage. Recruiting the next generation of first responders is essential to fill the gaps in emergency medical services in rural and urban communities.

In 2023, **Governor Shapiro** signed Act 15, which increased investments in EMS by nearly \$140 million per year, protecting access to health care — especially in areas where more coverage is needed.

Building on those critical investments, last year, the Department of Health launched a tuition assistance program to help recruit and retain EMS professionals. Over the next three years, individuals who have received a Pennsylvania state certification as an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT), or a paramedic after July 1, 2023, are eligible to have a portion of their tuition reimbursed between \$300 and \$5,000. [Pennsylvania-licensed EMS agencies are also eligible to receive up to \\$5,000 in reimbursement](#) per fiscal year for expenses related to recruitment and retention efforts.

Recruiting and retaining individuals who advance from an EMT to a paramedic will help ensure Pennsylvanians receive a higher level of care when needed. One of the goals of this statewide effort is to attract people who are interested in serving their communities through EMS while also creating the opportunity to educate residents about the important services EMS professionals provide.

To learn more about the requirements to begin a career in EMS, visit the [FAQ page](#) on the Department of Health's website.

Editor's Note: Video downloads and photos from the news conference are [available on PAcast](#).

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