



WHEN THE AMBULANCE DOESN'T COME

What happens when the ambulance doesn't come? Hospitals across the state often **need to transport patients to a higher level of care via an ambulance**, yet are increasingly facing **extremely long delays in ambulance response** which **delays patients receiving the care** they need. Other providers have similar issues. What happens to a person experiencing severe pain? What happens to a psychiatric patient when they can't be taken to the appropriate facility? What would you do if the ambulance didn't come?

This is a **critical problem facing Kentuckians** today because, on an all-too-frequent basis, ambulance service is not available to meet the needs of Kentucky's critically ill patients. **Hospitals, assisted living centers, nursing homes**, and other patient-centric facilities in both **urban and rural parts of the state** are finding all too often when they call, **the ambulance simply doesn't come**.

- Patients frequently need to be moved to facilities that can provide greater care but can't be moved because no ambulance would come.
- Psychiatric patients have sometimes been left alone for days in bare rooms because no ambulance will come.
- Hospitals have had to resort to using medical emergency flights, which are enormously expensive to the patient, because no ambulance would come.
- Patients have been left in pain for hours on end because no ambulance would come.
- Hospitals have been forced to call for help from out of state because no ambulance would come.

WHY ARE AMBULANCE SERVICES DIFFERENT?

- Ambulances are the only health service which the Cabinet for Health and Family Services grants a Certificate of Need (CON), but does not license or regulate the service.
- Ambulances are also the only health service regulated by a board, the Kentucky Board of Emergency Medical Services (KBEMS), comprised of the regulated entities – ambulance providers.
- All other health services are regulated by the Office of Inspector General within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
- Complaints against ambulance services can only be made by completing a form on the KBEMS website, having it witnessed and notarized before any investigation is made. Then a committee of ambulance providers determines if any action is taken.

Complaints against all other health facilities can be lodged by calling an anonymous hotline, followed by an unannounced OIG inspection and potential licensure consequences.

THERE IS A SOLUTION:

- Make it easier for ambulance services to be established. Remove ambulance service from the State Health Plan, which would allow applications to be considered in non-substantive review within the CON framework.
- Currently anyone wishing to provide ambulance services must have the approval of all current providers in the area. That is no way to serve patients and the health of Kentuckians.
- Move the licensure and regulation of ambulance services back to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services Office of Inspector General (like all other health services) and stop allowing the fox to guard the henhouse.