NYS DOH Bureau of EMS & Trauma Services  
Briefing for EMS Agency Leadership and Providers  
Wednesday 1/6/21, 5:32 PM to 6:35 PM

Unofficial Notes

This is not verbatim transcript of the call. Notes were typed during the call and reviewed and added to afterward. There was no prepared agenda distributed before the call. Questions and/or comments from providers were submitted before and during the call.

Panelists:

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Valerie Ozga, Vital Signs Academy and Executive Secretary to SEMSCO and SEMAC  
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There were about 400 signed on during the call.

Amy Eisenhauer

• E-mail went out today related to a survey from the National Emergency Medical Services for Children Data Analysis Resource Center (NEDARC) which is a partner agency of EMSC. EMS agencies are encouraged to participate in the EMS for Children Survey. We need to know what is working and where we can do better.

Edward Mager

• Receiving a lot of questions about vaccinations.

• Western Region staff have been working on issues related to the upcoming Buffalo Bills playoff game this weekend. [News reports indicate NYS DOH is involved in planning which could potentially allow 6,700 fans into the stadium. Fans would get rapid COVID-19 tested on the way in and contact traced after to see what the effect is.]  

• Region has e-mailed out agency renewal packets and some have bounced back due to bad e-mail addresses. Agencies need to keep their contact information up to date. Use form DOH-2936 Certified EMS Agency Information Update Form

Peter Brodie

• Moving forward on documentation update. It will be implemented on 2/2/21 at midnight. Educational materials are in the final stages of being produced and are expected to go out in the next 2 to 3 weeks.

• Working on new on-line forms. They will be released in the next couple of days and will then be posted on the BEMS&TS web site. These will include forms on course work, requesting certification cards, narcotics reports, etc.
Mark Philippy

- Happy new year.
- State EMS Council meeting will be held next week.
- Working on Part 800 equipment standard and a few items for the State Emergency Medical Advisory Committee (SEMAC)

Ryan Greenberg

Vaccination & Vaccine Issues

On 12/31/20 Guidance for EMS Personnel to Receive COVID-19 Vaccination Weeks 1-4 (Through 1/10/21) was issued. It is posted on the BEMS&TS web site as Policy Statement 20-09.

More healthcare professionals are being added in weeks 2 and 4. Agencies will be receiving updated information on new POD sites. They should refer to the most current EXCEL lists. Lists can be filtered by county. If a county’s PODs are full an agency can send its personnel to a neighboring county. Keep in mind that 2nd vaccine dose should come from same POD and vaccine lot.

Vaccination is not mandatory. It is completely voluntary. Agencies are reporting 50% to 60% of EMS staff is going for vaccinations

Only 1 person should be scheduled per appointment slot. The group button should no longer be showing up on the appointment screen

Countermeasure Data Management System (CDMS) is being used in counties outside NYC to schedule 1st dose vaccinations and will also be used to send out notifications about 2nd dose vaccinations. For some providers the 1st and 2nd dose vaccinations will be at the same POD location. Providers should expect a notice for the 2nd vaccination about 4 days before before the 21 day (Pfizer) or 28 day (Maderna) point when the vaccination is due. If provider has not received notice by then they should have their agency notify BEMS&TS at covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov

There are a lot of under 18 year olds involved in EMS and are actively providing patient care. They are only eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine as Maderna is cleared for age 18 and older. Hospitals have received the Pfizer vaccine because they are better able to store it. Some other sites may also have received Pfizer. Reach out to a POD to see which vaccine they have if provider age is an issue. Some hospitals may have received Maderna vaccine – check the vaccination record card to determine which vaccine was administered.

Phase/Tier 1A eligibles include personnel involved in direct patient care. Fire or police personnel who drive an ambulance or attend in back would be in 1A. A single role provider not involved in patient care is in 1B. Expect more guidance on vaccinations for 1B personnel next week. This would include dispatchers.

If agencies are not receiving guidance documents they should notify BEMS&TS at covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov

If agencies have questions on whether personnel are in 1A or 1B they can e-mail Ryan Greenberg.

EMS providers who tested positive for COVID-19 should wait at least 10 days from the date testing positive if asymptomatic, or 10 days from the date of onset of symptoms and be fever-free and have improving symptoms prior to getting the vaccine.

If quarantined between 1st and 2nd dose do not go for 2nd dose but remain in quarantine until it ends and reschedule if necessary for the 2nd dose. 2nd vaccine dose in 21 or 28 days should be done at same POD site as 1st dose. Some PODs are transferring the operation to local health departments which are also opening new POD sites.

Some POD sites are reportedly not asking for documentation of EMS certification and agency ID. On investigation the POD advised they though CDMS took care of 1A eligibility and mistakenly thought they did not have to do secondary validation on-site.
After vaccination EMS providers still have to follow quarantine and/or travel guidance. They also need to continue to use masks and PPE such as N95 respirators and gowns as appropriate. Some counties doing contact tracing may consider use of PPE when determining the need for a provider to quarantine.

If there is a problem at a vaccination site for a provider who previously tested positive please notify BEMS&TS at covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov

EMS personnel are doing vaccinations. Agencies can log onto https://apps.health.ny.gov/pubpal/builder/survey/ems-survey-2 to request information on training to administer vaccinations.

The training package was completed last week. It currently involves a 350 screen PowerPoint presentation, videos and in-person skills assessment. It will be posted on the Vital Signs Academy web site for providers to go through as a self-learning process with an in-person skills assessment at the POD site where they will be working. Providers need only go through the training once and they will be able to transfer to other PODs. Content will cover stuff EMS does not currently do such as IM injections, what needs to be addressed prior to vaccine administration, etc. It will have information on both vaccines. Drawing up doses would depend on the POD site and there would be a stop line for MDs, PAs, etc.

If agency needs training this week reach out to Ryan Greenberg but wait till weekend or next week if possible.

Other Issues

Seeing a significant increase in COVID-19 cases among healthcare professionals. Agencies need sustainability.

In HQs and fire houses personnel need to follow appropriate masking and social distancing guidelines. Limit contacts and crew sizes wherever possible.

There are several departments around the state in crisis with multiple COVID-19 positive personnel in quarantine.

Wearing appropriate PPE including eye protection can limit exposures and need for quarantine.

State EMS Council (SEMSCO) and State Emergency Medical Advisory Committee (SEMAC) will be meeting next week. Committees will meet on Tuesday and Council in the afternoon and on Wednesday.

Revised Protocols for Personnel in Healthcare and Other Direct Care Settings to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure was issued 12/26/20. There is no longer an exemption for essential workers. It is realized that there could be significant impacts for EMS agencies. If there are such instances reach out to BEMS&TS and give examples that can be brought to the attention of DOH as such information may result in changes in the future. Send e-mail to covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov

NOTE: Subsequent to the briefing a clarification document was issued on 1/7/21 to provide guidance on the next steps for health care entities with current or imminent staffing shortages that threaten essential patient services. Click HERE to link to the document.

There will be push to get good contact information from EMS agencies. It is realized that changes for some agencies occur yearly with elections. The Health Commerce System (HCS) will be adding fields for additional contacts in an agency. More information to come in the next couple of days. Regional EMS Program Agencies can help local EMS agencies with access to the HCS.

Responses to Questions and/or Comments Submitted Before the Call

EMS agency dispatchers are in Phase/Tier 1B for vaccination eligibility. Timeline to start 1B vaccinations is dependent on vaccine deliveries and how quickly 1A vaccinations are completed. It could be another couple of weeks. There is no answer as to if different regions will be starting 1B vaccinations at different times.

NYS Travel guidance on COVID-19 testing and quarantine information is on-line at: COVID-19 Travel Advisory and Interim Guidance for Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in NYS Following out of State Travel
Education section reports there have been no exam delays. Additional guidance on exams is in the approval process.

Epidemiologist may be supplying additional information on vaccination for a provider with history of prior anaphylactic reactions.

Bucket/group 3 scheduling of Tier 1A personnel for vaccinations can be done while 1st and 2nd buckets are finishing up. Agencies should consult the latest EXCEL file for information on available PODs.

EMS agencies are doing standbys at PODs. Some believe this is a requirement but that information is not coming from BEMS&TS. It may be coming from a local health department based on misinformation. If agencies are being told standby is required they should notify BEMS&TS of source of info by sending email to covidemsinfo@health.ny.gov. EMS agencies may want to be notified of PODs in their area and may want to do standby. This could involve mega PODs doing hundreds of vaccinations a day or situation where high risk or special needs populations are being vaccinated.

PODs can go to BEMS&TS if they are seeking EMS help for vaccinations. There are required weekly reports covering 4 or 5 questions.

It has been suggested that vaccination PODs be run by larger fire and police agencies, even teacher unions. FDNY has over 13,000 personnel and NYPD has 35,000. Separate coordinated efforts can reach out to BEMS&TS which is working on semantics related to this. Storage requirements of the vaccines need to be considered.

Hospitals are having serious capacity issues. Holidays may be involved in upcoming problems. DOH is working on handling surge diversions and issuing guidance on what it means.

Situations of long wait times at ERs are increasing. In some cases ambulances are waiting 2 to 3 hours. If wait time of over an hour at a hospital is common (not a one off event) notify BEMS&TS District Chief. If your EMS agency is experiencing long wait times at a hospital, also complete the form: https://apps.health.ny.gov/pubpal/builder/survey/ems-agencies-to-report-long-wait

Responses to Questions and/or Comments Submitted During the Call
(A number of questions were answered earlier in the call)

For in-person didactic training person would have to get a course code from BEMS&TS.

Looking for feedback on these briefing calls. Plan is to keep having them but may change days and times. Chat box during call indicated time preferences from 4:00 PM to 7:30 PM. It is recognized that volunteers would want call after work day and career personnel during work day.

It was noted that NYS Volunteer Ambulance & Rescue Association was sending out “impeccable” notes of the calls.

Medical Directors across state were recognized for their work behind the scenes.

Narcotics report may be submitted electronically. Any operational changes involving Controlled Substances needs to be approved.

EMS students at the stage of assisting in direct patient care are eligible for vaccinations in Phase/Tier 1A.