



Ground Ambulance Organizations: Reporting Volunteer Labor Call

Moderated by: Diane Maupai
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Operator: At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to today's Medicare Learning Network® event. All lines will remain in a listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session. This call is being recorded and transcribed. If anyone has any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I will now turn the call over to Diane Maupai. Thank you. You may begin.

Announcements & Introduction

Diane Maupai: Thank you. This is Diane Maupai from the Provider Communications Group at CMS, and I'll be your moderator today. Welcome to this Medicare Learning Network call about reporting volunteer labor in the new Ground Ambulance Data Collection System.

Before we get started, you received a link to the presentation in your confirmation email. The presentation is available at the following URL – go.cms.gov/npc. Again, that URL is go.cms.gov/npc.

Today's event is not intended for the press, and the remarks are not considered on the record. If you are a member of the press, you may listen in, but please refrain from asking questions during the question-and-answer session. If you have inquiries, contact press@cms.hhs.gov.

Our presenters are from the RAND Corporation. Our first speaker – and all three at RAND offices. I'll now turn the call over to Lisa Sontag-Padilla.

Presentation

Dr. Lisa Sontag-Padilla: Thanks, Diane. Again, hi everyone. My name is Lisa Sontag-Padilla from the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization that's helping CMS design and implement the Ground Ambulance Data Collection System. And I'll be presenting today along with three of my RAND colleagues, Doctors Sara Heins, Christine Buttorff, and Andrew Mulcahy. Now the other presenters and I, as we go along, will call out slide numbers as we proceed today so you can follow along with us.

So, before I get started, I will note that the acronyms used in the presentation are listed on slide 2 for your reference. And now, on to slide 3. So, the session today will cover data collection and reporting requirements for organizations with volunteer labor. Now, the presentation will cover every question specific to organizations with volunteer labor.

Specifically, we will cover questions from Section 2, Section 7, and Section 11. Now, if you joined us for the Labor Cost Ambulance Open Door Forum call on February 6, you'll recognize some similarities on what types of data you'll report for volunteers. However, there are many nuances that are specific to organizations with volunteers.

We will use today's session to dive into those nuances, providing examples on how to report information for individual questions throughout the instrument. Now, at the end of the presentation, we will walk through an example of how a hypothetical ground ambulance organization with volunteer labor would complete some sections of the instrument.



Note that the presentation is structured to follow the printable version of the data collection instrument, which is also available on the CMS Ambulances Services Center website. If you have questions related to volunteers that are not covered during today's presentation, you may ask them during the Q&A at the end of our session or send them to the CMS Ambulance Data Collection email address, which is ambulancedatacollection – all one word – @cms.hhs.gov.

If you have any questions about other sections or topics of the instrument that we aren't covering today, there are several other resources posted on the Medicare Ambulances Services Center website. In addition, CMS is offering additional calls and presentations over the next few months on various topics related to the instrument, including a call on March 12 on public safety organizations.

Section 2: Organizational Characteristics

Moving on to slide 4. Section 2 presents a number of questions to learn more about your ambulance organization's characteristics. For example, are you hospital based, or is your organization fire department based? Do you respond to emergency calls for service?

Now, beyond giving CMS a better understanding of your organization, these questions are important because they will determine which questions and instructions you see later on in the instrument. Most relevant to this presentation, question 7 in Section 2 asks if your organization uses volunteer labor.

When deciding whether or not to report that your organization uses volunteers for the purposes of this instrument, here are some things to consider. Volunteers who receive stipends, honoraria, or other types of monetary benefits are still considered volunteers. Volunteers who support only non-ground ambulance duties do not count as volunteers for the purposes of this instrument.

Finally, staff who volunteer at another organization but not yours do not count as volunteers. If you indicate that your organization does use volunteers, you will get additional questions about volunteers in Section 7, which asks about labor costs.

Sections 3 through 6

And moving to slide 5, I want to mention there are a number of other sections that we are skipping over today for the purposes of this presentation. Sections 3 through 6 ask about service area, emergency response time, service volume, and service mix, and are relevant for all organizations completing the instrument.

But, because these sections are identical for organizations with and without volunteer labor, we don't focus on these further today. You can learn more about these sections by reviewing slides from our prior call, which provided an overview of the instrument, on December 5th.

Section 7

We now move on to slide 6, where we begin our discussion around reporting labor costs associated with volunteer labor. Before we dive into the details of this section, I want to take a moment to acknowledge that



ground ambulance organizations represent a very diverse group of organizations with a wide array of staffing needs and structures.

Volunteer staff are vital to the operations and sustainability of many of these organizations. Capturing information about time spent on ground ambulance operations, as well as costs associated with supporting volunteer staff such as stipends, honoraria, or benefits, is crucial to accurately estimating the cost of ground ambulance operations. Now, while some ground ambulance organizations utilize only paid staff, many others use a mix of volunteer and paid staff and some rely on volunteer staff explicitly.

On slide 7, we review the type of information you will be required to report for volunteer labor. For each labor category, you'll need to report the following – the number of individual volunteers, the number of total hours worked by volunteers, and the number of hours worked unrelated to ground ambulance operations by volunteers.

You must also report total compensation of any type to volunteers, including stipends, allowances, benefits, and any other type of monetary compensation. You will not, however, collect or report any imputed valuation of volunteer labor, meaning you will not report anything along the lines of what wages would have been paid if they were paid staff. Instead, you will report hours worked and any actual expenses, but nothing along the lines of what they would have been paid.

Slide 8 provides a high-level overview of Section 7. The overall goal of Section 7 is to capture information on your organization's staffing and costs associated with ground ambulance labor. Although this section as well isn't for all organizations, we won't go into any details for reporting on paid staff.

Now, broadly, this section of the instrument is broken up into two steps. The first step is reporting which types of staff are used by your organization. And we'll review the instructions on how to do this in the next few slides.

The second step involves reporting information on hours worked and costs for your staff in each category. So, more specifically for the purposes of this presentation, we focused on volunteer staff categories. And you'll report the total number of individuals who are volunteers; the total hours worked annually; total hours worked annually unrelated to ground ambulance operations; and your organization's total cost associated with volunteers such as stipends, allowances, or monetary compensation.

Section 7, Question 1

As shown on slide 9, question 1 of Section 7 asks you to report whether your organization has staff in different categories using a table like this. Labor categories are represented in each row. The two columns are meant to capture whether you have paid or volunteer staff in each category.

Note that instead of reporting a count of how many staff members fall into each category, here you will simply check off whether you have any staff members for each. If your organization uses volunteer labor and the volunteer column does not appear in the table, be sure to go back to Section 2, question 7, and verify that you have correctly marked "yes" to having volunteers.



There are some minor differences in how this table will appear for public safety-based organizations such as fire- and police-based organizations. We encourage public safety-based organizations to dial in to our upcoming March 12th call where we will walk through data collection and reporting requirements for public safety-based organizations specifically.

Moving to slide 10, where we discuss how to categorize volunteer staff and then staff in general, it's important that each staff member is assigned to just one labor category for the purposes of reporting throughout Section 7, even if they perform multiple roles within your organization.

Now, this is important as it minimizes the chances of double counting staff, and it eliminates the need to split hours and compensation for a single person across multiple staff categories. In the next few slides, we will go into detail on how to assign each staff member into a single labor category.

Slide 10 distills the most important instructions down to a flowchart. Now, here, we focus exclusively on decisions that affect whether you categorize staff into one of the following volunteer labor categories. Now, the instruction can be simplified into four main questions.

First, does the staff member have ground ambulance responsibilities at your organization? If no, do not include them in reporting. Second, were they paid or volunteer staff at your organization? Third, did they have an EMT response role at your organization? And, finally, which specific EMT response or administration/facilities category do they belong to? Answering these four questions for each of your staff members will tell you in most cases how they should be categorized for the purposes of reporting.

Now moving on to slide 11. We walked through some of the rules for determining how to categorize staff into the various categories. First, as we mentioned, each volunteer should contribute to only one labor category, even if they perform multiple roles in your organization.

Volunteers who get a stipend or other modest amount but are considered volunteers per state and federal labor laws are still considered volunteers. Staff who volunteer at other organizations but not yours should not be counted as volunteers. Do not include volunteers who had only non-ground ambulance responsibilities.

Include volunteer EMT response staff in the appropriate EMT response staff category that match their level at the start of the data collection period. For administration/facility staff with multiple roles, assign each volunteer to a category indicating their primary activity. And, finally, anyone who is paid as a salaried, hourly, or contracted employee at some point during the data collection period should not be counted as a volunteer but, instead, as paid staff.

Moving on to slide 12, we provide some examples of how to think about categorizing different types of volunteer staff that may have multiple responsibilities. So, let's first consider a volunteer administrator handling billing and clerical duties and occasional vehicle maintenance. So, based on the rules, this person would be categorized in the volunteer administration/facilities category because of their primary responsibility.

Next, let's consider a volunteer EMT intermediate who became a volunteer EMT paramedic during the data collection period. This person would be categorized as a volunteer EMT intermediate based on their position at the start of the data collection period.



Next, we have a volunteer EMT basic who became a paid EMT basic during the data collection period. Now, this person would be categorized as a paid EMT basic because you always include staff who had both paid and volunteer duties in the appropriate paid category.

Next, consider a volunteer EMT basic who also performs some clerical work. This person would count as a volunteer EMT basic, because staff with any EMT response duties are always categorized in the appropriate EMT response category.

Finally, consider a volunteer EMT basic with only air ambulance responsibilities. This person would not be reported because they do not have any ground ambulance duties.

Now, moving to slide 13. Most organizations will have staff in some but not all of the categories listed in the table in question 1. So, for each labor category that you report not using in the table in question 1, you will be asked to provide the reasons why you reported no in both the paid and volunteer columns.

There are a few common reasons listed in the question itself, including the labor category is part of our ground ambulance operation but is paid for or provided at no cost by another entity; one or more of your paid staff perform these functions but these staff were assigned to other categories per the instruction; you do not have in this labor category any staff related to your ground ambulance operation, or you contract with another organization for this role. Or, if none of these apply, you can enter your own reason. Note that you are able to check multiple reasons per category.

So, for instance, let's say you have a volunteer who has both EMT basic duties and provides clerical support. When categorizing this staff, you checked EMT basic and did not select that you have any paid or volunteer staff in the administrative category.

In this instance, you would select reason number 2, one or more of your staff perform these functions but these staff were assigned to other categories, per the instruction. I will now pass the presentation over to Sara, who will discuss reporting volunteer hours and associated costs.

Section 7.1 and Section 7.2

Dr. Sara Heins: Thanks, Lisa. Moving on to slide 14, we are going to cover the next two sections. Section 7.1 and 7.2 cover paid labor, so we will not discuss them during the call. However, we recognize that many organizations will have both volunteer and paid labor.

For a detailed overview of how to complete Section 7.1 and 7.2 for paid labor, refer to the Ambulance Open Door Forum, February 6, 2020, Staffing and Labor Cost slides, which are available at the Ambulance Services Center website.

Section 7.3

Going on to slide 15, we turn to Section 7.3 on volunteer labor. In this section, you'll need to report on the number of individuals who are volunteers during the data collection period by labor category according to the



rules presented earlier in the presentation. You will also report on total hours for volunteers by labor category and, finally, on total costs associated with volunteers including costs like stipends, allowances, or honoraria.

Moving on to slide 16. Now, we will go into the individual questions in Section 7.3 starting with question 1, number of EMT response volunteers. In this question, you will report the number of individuals who are EMT or response volunteers during the entire reporting period, regardless of the number of hours they worked annually.

As a reminder, do not include an individual in Section 7.3 if they did not contribute at all to ground ambulance operations or were paid – or were a paid employee at any point during the reporting period. If a volunteer EMT became a paid EMT during the reporting period, report them in Section 7.1, not here.

We have a brief example of how to count volunteers. In this example, the organization has 12 volunteer staff members, including seven volunteers who have only EMT duties, three volunteers have EMT and administrative duties, and two volunteers performing only administrative duties. This organization would answer 10 for the number of EMT response volunteers because they have a total of 10 – seven plus three – volunteers who performed any EMT duties.

On to slide 17, Section 7.3, question 2. In this question, for each category of EMT staff, you will be asked to report total hours worked annually for volunteer EMT response staff and hours worked annually unrelated to ground ambulance. If your organization is a fire, police or public safety based, the last column will also say, “hours worked annually unrelated to fire, police, or other public safety duties.”

In the column that asks for total volunteers, all – for all volunteer EMT response staff, you will report total hours worked annually by volunteer or EMT response staff category, including full- and part-time staff in each category that your organization previously reported. So, this includes hours worked both related and unrelated to ground ambulance and other public safety duties.

In the next column, you will report hours worked unrelated to ground ambulance duties only. For all responses, do not include time spent on call or time spent in fundraising.

Next, on slide 18, we list the specific activities that are included in each column. In the column on total hours worked, you will include response duties including ambulance, fire, police, or other public safety duties, as well as other types of duties unrelated to response duties.

These hours worked unrelated to response duties include activities like air ambulance operations, health care delivery unrelated to ground ambulance such as work in the clinic, public health responsibilities, community education outreach, community paramedicine, or any other responsibility unrelated to ground ambulance, fire, police, or other public safety activities. And again, for all responses, do not include time on call or time spent fundraising.

On slide 19, we present an example of how to answer Section 7.3, question 2. In this example, the organization has two volunteer EMTs at the basic level. The first volunteer worked 500 hours during the data collection period and had only ground ambulance responsibilities.



The second volunteer worked 750 hours during the data collection period with 250 of those hours unrelated to ground ambulance duties. In this case, the EMT was doing community service – community education and outreach. So, for the EMT basic staff category, the total hours will be 1,250, which is 500 plus 750. And the total hours worked unrelated to ground ambulance duties will be 250 hours.

Moving on to slide 20. Section 7.3, question 3, asks you to report the number of individuals who are administration or facility volunteers. As for all questions, in this instrument, do not include individuals if they did not contribute to ground ambulance operations and – or do not include individuals in the section who are a paid employee at any point during the reporting period.

And this includes employees who transitioned from volunteer to paid or paid to volunteer staff during the reporting period. And these individuals should be reported in the paid labor section only. However, again, you can still report individuals as volunteers if they received stipends, honoraria, or benefits.

Finally, for this question, do not include anyone with ground ambulance or EMT responsibilities during the reporting period even if they also had administrative duties. You will – you will have reported them in the previous section.

Now, on slide 21, we report on labor hours for administration/facility volunteers in question 4 and medical director volunteers in question 5. You will only see these questions if you previously indicated that your organization had volunteers in this role. As in the previous questions, for each staff category, you will report total number of hours worked annually and number of hours unrelated to ground ambulance activities.

On slide 22, Section 7.3, question 6, you will report costs associated with volunteers. Even though volunteers aren't paid a salary, CMS heard from organizations that volunteers sometimes provide – that organizations sometimes provide nominal financial benefits to volunteers. And in some cases, state law allows volunteers to receive health or retirement benefits.

In this question, you can report these costs, including stipends, honoraria, or benefits such as health insurance and other compensation for ground ambulance volunteer labor. Do not include estimated market for the value of labor, only costs actually incurred by your organization. If costs are paid by other entities – for example, your local municipality – you must collect and include the dollar amount in your response in this item.

Sections 8-10

Moving on to slide 23. Before we dive in to Section 11 on other costs, I want to mention that there are a few sections that we are skipping over for the purposes of this presentation. These sections, 8 through 10, ask about facilities costs, vehicle costs, and equipment consumable and supply costs. The questions in these sections are identical for organizations with and without volunteer labor, so we will not be discussing these sections on today's call.



Section 11, Other Costs

On slide 24, we discuss Section 11, other costs. Here, you can report all costs related to ground ambulance operations – all other costs related to ground ambulance operations. As a general rule, report all of your organization's costs and make sure that you don't report any cost in multiple places.

Most costs associated with volunteers will be reported in Section 7. But you may report a few other expenses in this section – for example, any costs for training volunteers that were not already reported in the labor section. Or costs related to conducting physicals or recruiting volunteers can be listed in Section 11, question 3.

Some organizations may have workers' compensation insurance for their volunteer staff. You may report this either as a volunteer benefit in Section 7.3, question 6, or as an overall cost for the organization in Section 11, depending on how your organization tracks it. However, make sure that you do not report these costs in both places.

Summary of Requirements for Volunteer Organizations

Now that we've walked through all the relevant sections of the instrument, on slide 25 we will give a summary of requirements for volunteer organizations. First – and this is true of both paid and volunteer staff – do not count an employee twice across the various staff categories.

More specifically, an employee should not be counted as both paid and volunteer. If an employee transitioned from volunteer to paid, count them as paid, and count all of their hours worked and compensation for the reporting period in that category.

If a volunteer received benefits or a nominal stipend, they may still be considered a volunteer, and associated hours worked and costs will be reported in the volunteer section. Report all costs associated with volunteers such as stipend, health insurance, and training in only one section following the instruction. Do not double count costs such as uniforms for volunteers in multiple sections of the instrument.

Continuing with our summary on slide 26. When possible, collect and report the specific hours worked by volunteers. We are aware that some organizations may not track volunteer hours. For example, they might just track number of responses or runs or completed training tasks.

However, there will not be an alternative approach to reporting hours, and your organization may need to begin tracking volunteer hours if this is not something that you currently do. Please keep in mind that for organizations reporting on a calendar year basis, the data collection period is currently under way, and the requirement to track these hours began January 1, 2020.

Now, on slide 27, I'll turn the presentation over to Christine, who will go through a step-by-step illustration of how a hypothetical ambulance organization with volunteers might answer questions in the labor section.

Section 7.3 Illustrative Example

Dr. Christine Buttorff: Thanks, Sara. Starting on slide 28, we will walk through completing labor sections related to volunteers for a hypothetical government ground ambulance organization. All answers are hypothetical and are not intended to provide benchmarks for any question. Instead, the goal of this example is to illustrate the process of filling out this section of the survey.

Certain items will be marked “not shown” if not applicable to the organization based on previous responses. I also want to note that this organization might be less complex than your organization. We will address issues that may be more relevant to your organization in other webinars.

On slide 29, we provide some background info on this hypothetical organization. It is a government EMS organization with no fire or public safety services. It primarily serves a small city and provides around 2,000 transports each year. The organization provides multi-emergency transports from a variety of payers. They have a mix of paid and volunteer staff. The organization’s 12-month data collection period started January 1st, 2020.

Before we get into how this organization would answer questions on labor, I want to give you an overview of their labor structure on slide 30. The organization has 13 EMTs in total. Eight EMTs are part-time volunteers, and five EMT paramedics are full-time paid staff.

All of the EMTs and paramedics respond to emergency calls, transport patients, and occasionally do public health outreach. One of the volunteer EMT basics occasionally performs basic vehicle maintenance.

The organization also has two administrative staff members who are part-time volunteers. The administrator and medical director are both paid staff. This organization also contracts out for several types of services, which includes facilities maintenance and cleaning, advanced vehicle maintenance, and dispatch. Cost and labor hours for contracted services should not be reported in Section 7. Contracted services will be reported in Section 11 on other costs.

Now on slide 31, let’s walk through how this organization would report information in Section 7. The organization would check “yes” in the volunteer column for the EMT basic and the volunteer administrative staff. For the paid column, this organization would check “yes” for the EMT paramedics, the administrator, and the medical director rows.

As a reminder, each employee should only be counted once in one role throughout the labor section. So, as mentioned previously, let’s assume that one of the volunteer EMT basics does basic vehicle maintenance but more complex repairs are contracted out. In that case, you would categorize that individual as an EMT and not as vehicle maintenance staff.

This organization does not have several categories of staff such as EMT intermediates. In these cases, both of the columns are marked “no.” Any contracted services are also marked “no” for both of these columns. This organization will not be shown the additional options for staff with fire or police responsibilities because the organization indicated in earlier sections of the instrument that they did not have these roles.



Finally, we are focusing on reporting for volunteers in this webinar. This example organization would report their paid staff in Section 7.1 and 7.2. We showed several examples of reporting for paid staff in a previous call on labor reporting.

Slide 32 starts the section on volunteer labor. If your organization does not use volunteer labor, you would not see this section in the programmed instrument. Question 1 asks for the number of EMT response volunteers, and this organization reports eight.

For question 2, you need to report the total hours that these EMT volunteers worked during the calendar year 2020. In this example, they have eight part-time volunteer EMTs who worked between 15 and 20 hours a week. Across the eight volunteers, the number of hours worked is 6,750. You can see our calculations in the gray box below.

Next, you would report the hours worked annually that are unrelated to ground ambulance operations. In this case, the volunteer EMTs spent a total of 50 hours during 2020 doing public health outreach activities.

Questions 3 and 4 appear on slide 33 because this organization indicated they have two administrative volunteers. The organization reports two administrative volunteers for question 3. The volunteers worked a total of 1,500 hours. Our calculations for the number of hours are in the gray box.

Moving on to slide 34. Question 6 asks about stipends, honoraria, benefits, and other compensation for your ground ambulance labor. This organization provides a \$500 stipend to volunteers and pays \$100 in workers' compensation premiums for each volunteer. Six hundred dollars times eight volunteer EMT basics equals \$4,800. The administrative volunteers were paid stipends of \$500 with no additional benefit. So, this organization would answer "yes" to question 6 and \$5,800 for question 6.1.

Summary

Moving on to slide 35, I'll provide some final thoughts and transition over to the Q&A session. First, the examples provided in this section are for illustrative purposes only. Responses will vary dramatically based on your organization type, staffing structure, and other factors.

The specific information that you will have to report will vary depending on how you answer questions about your organization in earlier sections of the instrument and within Section 7. If you are interested in diving deeper into some of these issues we've touched on throughout this call, CMS is hosting additional sessions focused on data collection and reporting for certain types of organizations, such as public safety-based and provider organizations.

Resources

On slide 36, I wanted to draw your attention to the frequently asked questions document, or FAQ, available on the Ambulances Services Center website. The FAQ includes several questions and answers related to collecting and reporting staffing and labor information. CMS adds to this FAQ as it receives additional questions. We encourage you to check the FAQ before emailing the CMS Ambulance Data Collection inbox.



Slide 38 has a link to a survey regarding your thoughts on today's call. And with that, we'll open it up to questions from listeners.

Question & Answer Session

Diane Maupai: Thank you, Christine. As Christine said, we'll now take your questions. But please remember that this event is being recorded and transcribed. In an effort to get to as many questions as possible, please limit yourself to one question.

And you can also – if you have a question specific to your organization, you can mail it to the resource mailbox and check those FAQs that are on slide 36 and then we can do more research. Preference will be given to the general questions applicable to a larger audience, and we'll be mindful of the time spent on each question. All right, Blair, we're ready to take our first caller.

Operator: To ask a question, press "star" followed by the number "1" on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question, so anything you say, or any background noise, will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press "star," "1" to get back into the queue. We will address additional questions as time permits. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster. Please hold while we compile the Q&A roster. The first question will come from the line of Eric Peterson.

Eric Peterson: Yes. My question is our volunteers respond either – they respond as first responders either in SUVs or on fire apparatus. They don't necessarily have any ground ambulance responsibilities. Do we report these volunteer members?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: This is Andrew Mulcahy from RAND. If those volunteers are going out on medical calls where an ambulance is deployed, then they would be in scope for the purposes of reporting. Where – the definition of ground ambulance operations is in the instrument and covers a broader set of services around responding to medical calls. If they do arrive at the scene on a firetruck, that would still – that could be still considered a ground ambulance role.

Eric Peterson: Okay. Thank you very much.

Operator: The next question will come from the line of Ken Devin.

Ken Devin: Thank you. My question was answered by the previous caller.

Operator: The next question will come from the line of Samar Dorward.

Samar Dorward: Yes. So, if the chief of operations is also an EMT, do they report their hours 100 percent under volunteer EMT response staff or is their administrative hours counted separately?



Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: This is Andrew Mulcahy from RAND again. That's a potentially complicated case. The instructions in the instrument do address it, though. So, there are two rules in play here. First, if a person is ever a paid staff at your organization, they should always be included in the appropriate paid category rather than a volunteer category.

And, then, the second rule that comes into play is that EMT response role will always trump an administrative or facilities role. And, so, if I am understanding your scenario correctly, that person will be reported as a paid staff, but in one of the EMT categories.

Samar Dorward: No. No. Is my line still open?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Yes.

Samar Dorward: Okay. No. Our – we are 100 percent volunteer. Our chief of operations and everything – all of our administrative – everything is volunteer.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: My mistake. So, in that case, the person would be reported in the appropriate EMT response volunteer category entirely.

Samar Dorward: Okay. Perfect. That answers it. Thank you.

Operator: The next question will come from the line of Neil Hogan.

Neil Hogan: Yes. We provide uniforms and workers' comp coverage. The workers' comp, of course, is a state requirement. The uniforms remain the property of the squad and have to be returned when a member leaves our squad. Is that a form of compensation or no?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: So, this is Andrew from RAND again. CMS, as the instrument was being developed, heard about a range of ways that costs for workers' comp premiums and uniforms and many other types of expenditures are accounted for by different organizations. So, there is some flexibility on where to report those expenditures.

I think the most important thing, as the presenters touched on a couple of times today, is that the expense is only counted once somewhere. So, in the case of workers' compensation, as Sara mentioned, you may report that as a benefit in Section 7.3, question 6. You can also – if you have a workers' comp premium amount you paid for your entire organization, not report it in Section 7 and, instead, report it in Section 11. I think I'd probably pursue whatever option is easiest for your organization.

And in terms of uniforms, there's a separate question about uniforms. I believe it's in Section 10. And, again, if you are going – if you find it easier to report on those costs associated with uniforms in Section 10, you simply wouldn't report it as a benefit when you are reporting costs associated with your volunteers. You'd report it in Section 10 instead.

Neil Hogan: Thank you.



Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Does that answer your question?

Neil Hogan: Yes, it does.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Okay.

Operator: The next question will come from the line of Kelly Anderson.

Kelly Anderson: Yes. My question relates – so, we have someone who does billing and administrative duties for the ambulance. But, it's a municipal-owned ambulance service. So, that person is actually paid under the general fund and not under the ambulance fund. Would they still count as a paid employee or would they count as a volunteer because their expense does not show up under the ambulance?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: That's a good – that's a good question. And that's a scenario that I think is – probably applies to many ground ambulance organizations. In that case, you would treat the person as a paid employee.

Kelly Anderson: Okay.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Paid staff. And I think a common scenario is for an ambulance organization to be part of the municipal government and then have some staff and other costs paid for in some other way by the same municipality. In that case, the costs for that person have to be collected and reported. If they're not, there would be a gap in the cost for your ambulance operations, and the costs for your organization would look lower than they actually are.

Kelly Anderson: Yes.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: So, in that case, it would be important to consider the person as paid and then to reach out to the municipality to find that – find the compensation for that – for that staff member.

Kelly Anderson: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Operator: Again, to ask a question, press "star" followed by the number "1" on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the "pound" key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note, your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question, so anything you say, or any background noise, will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press "star," "1" to get back into the queue, and we will address additional questions as time permits. The next question will come from the line of Steve McKenneth.

Steve McKenneth: Hi. Two questions, two parts. The medical director – if it's a sort of a volunteer, does a time study or documentation required? And two, board members that are volunteer – if they work on committees or anything associated with it, are they considered volunteer time as well? Thank you.



Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: So, there is a separate set of questions – there are separate sets of questions on medical director time, if it is in fact volunteered. So, you can separately report on a medical director in either the paid staff section, which is 7.2, or in the volunteer section, 7.3, as appropriate.

In terms of what time would be considered in scope, I'd report the total time that that – that that medical director paid, or volunteer spent working. And, then, if there was some share of that that was unrelated to ground ambulance for whatever reason, you'd report that separately.

On the board members, if there are – that's a good question. I think that's one that may need to be discussed internally and then addressed through an FAQ or through some other means.

Steve McKenneth: Just one clarification on the medical director. Is there any documentation or – having done Medicare cost reports before, is any documentation required for the medical director or is it just sort of our best guess as the time or his best – his or her best guess of time?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Yes. So – and I think it is important to stress that this is not a cost report. It is a survey-based instrument. The responses you'll provide will need to be complete and accurate. But there is no formal documentation required.

I think in the case of staff like a volunteer medical director, if that is the scenario that applies to your organization, there may be a need to start collecting some information on how much time the medical director is spending in that role.

And some organizations, more broadly for volunteers, may need to start collecting some additional information on how much time their volunteers work at their organization.

Operator: The next question will come from the line of Mike Tornstrom.

Mike Tornstrom: Hi there. My question is on emergency medical responders and non-EMT personnel. I note that the presentation is very heavily weighted on EMT response hours and so on. Are the EMRs also represented appropriately or stipend hours or volunteer hours?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: Right. This is Andrew from RAND again. Thanks for your question. The phrase in the presentation that came up several times is EMT/response. And that category includes a broader set of labor categories beyond EMTs including EMRs.

If you take a look at the printable version of the instrument, you can see the complete list of staff that fall into that EMT/response category. It includes EMRs; ambulance drivers that are not EMTs or EMRs; as well as nurses, doctors, or other medical staff that don't fall into one of the other categories.

Mike Tornstrom: Okay. Thank you. I just was concerned that that might be misrepresented when they start looking because it always says "EMT." But, thank you.



Operator: Again, to ask a question, press “star” followed by the number “1” on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the “pound” key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question, so anything you say, or any background noise, will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press “star,” “1” to get back in the queue, and we will address additional questions as time permits. Our next question comes from the line of Shelly Miller.

Shelly Miller: Yes. I believe this question may have been answered at the beginning. I just want to make sure that I understood that if our agency has first responders that are associated with the local fire department also responding to scenes that we are to include their hours in our volunteer labor.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: I think it does. This is Andrew again from RAND. I think it does matter a little bit on – depending on your context. There is a set of questions in Section – I think it’s 5 – where you can report whether your organization responds to calls for service with staff from another organization that is not part of the same business or operation as yours.

If that’s the case, you can – you can indicate that that happens. You will then – you would then, though, not report on the staff. If they are firefighter EMTs at your organization or if you are part of the municipality as an ambulance organization and then there is a fire department also part of that municipality, that for the purposes of reporting is considered basically being part of the same organization and you should include them.

So, it depends on the relationship between that other organization doing the response with you. If you are part of the same broader company or municipality, then you would report on them. If they are part of a different organization but happens to respond to calls for service with you – for instance, staff from an adjacent municipality, then you would indicate that that happened in Section 5 and not include them in the labor section.

Shelly Miller: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: All right. One clarification there. If you do – if – in that case, if they are responding to calls for service with you and your organization pays them to do that – say, you have a contract with them to respond – then you would report that cost associated with that contractual arrangement.

Shelly Miller: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: And, again, to ask a question, press “star” followed by the number “1” on your touchtone phone. To remove yourself from the queue, press the “pound” key. Remember to pick up your handset before asking your question to assure clarity. Once your line is open, state your name and organization.

Please note your line will remain open during the time you are asking your question, so anything you say, or any background noise, will be heard in the conference. If you have more than one question, press “star,” “1” to get back into the queue, and we will address additional questions as time permits. The next question comes from the line of Lyle Robbins. Lyle, your line is open.



Lyle Robbins: Hello. My name is Lyle Robbins, North Shore Ambulance. We pay mileage for when they respond to calls. And, then, we also pay mileage when they are on administrative duties. Do we have to separate that out when we are trying to sort this between administrative duties and response times – response cost?

Dr. Andrew Mulcahy: No. If it is an expense related to volunteers, that amount is reported in a single question in the – in the – in the instrument in Section 7.3. So, you would tally up all of your expenses associated with volunteers and report it just in one total summed number.

So, it's not important – it wouldn't be important to separate that out into different components for the purposes of reporting, although I should say in that case if they are volunteers that are doing responses, then they would not be considered volunteers – sorry – volunteer administrative staff for the purposes of reporting.

I think you mentioned they were doing both volunteer response and mileage for administrative duties, too. So, you would categorize them all as volunteer responders. And, then, the amount that they receive would be reported as part of one large sum in question 6 in Section 7.3.

Lyle Robin: Okay. Thank you.

Operator: And with no further audio questions showing, I will hand the call back to Miss Diane Maupai.

Additional Information

Diane Maupai: Well, thank you, Blair. I just wanted to remind everyone that there are a lot of resources on slide 36. Also, we hope you will take a few minutes to evaluate your experience today. See slide 38 for more information. An audio recording and transcript will be available in about two weeks at go.cms.gov/npc.

Again, my name is Diane Maupai, and I'd like to thank our presenters and also thank you for participating in today's Medicare Learning Network call on the Ground Ambulance Organization Data Collection System. Thank you and have a good day.

Operator: Thank you for participating in today's conference call. You may now disconnect. Presenters, please hold.