

**EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AUTHORITY – A Public Trust
Board of Trustees Special Meeting**

Wednesday, April 24, 2013 - Noon

Legal, Ethics and Public Relations Committee – via video conference
EMSA

1111 Classen Drive, Oklahoma city
1417 N. Lansing Ave., Tulsa, OK

Minutes:

NOTICE AND AGENDA for the Special Meeting of the Legal, Ethics and Public Relations Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Emergency Medical Services Authority, a Public Trust, was posted April 22, 2013 in the offices of the City Clerk of Oklahoma City at 8:02 am, and with the City Clerk of the City of Tulsa on April 22, 2013 at 8:06 am, more than 48 hours prior to the time set for the meeting.

A quorum was present, and the meeting was called to order at 12:05 pm, by
Dr. Jim Rodgers

TRUSTEES PRESENT

Dr. Jim Rodgers
Mr. Clay Bird
Ms. Lillian Perryman

OTHERS PRESENT

Kelli Bruer, EMSA
Jillian Balfour, EMSA
James Davis

TRUSTEES ABSENT

Dr. Ed Shadid

AGENDA

1. Discussion and briefing regarding Community Relations plan:

Ms. Kelli Bruer, EMSA's Director of Communications and Public Relations, began the meeting with a summary and update of the Community Relations plan regarding the City of Tulsa's Utility Fee Program (TotalCare).

She explained that due to some very negative press which began two years ago, in which articles were written about EMSA's billing processes. The articles stated, among other things, that patients who were allegedly TotalCare members were being wrongfully billed and sued.

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Approximately ten years ago, EMSA had conducted a quantitative telephone survey on EMSA's image, and because benchmarking data remained from that survey, it was decided to do another similar survey. Both surveys were limited to the city of Tulsa. Some new questions were added regarding the recent negative press to determine if opinions of EMSA by citizens had been affected by the press, and to determine if the public understands the utility program or is confused by it.

Key findings from the recent survey were:

- Favorable ratings held, despite the negative press, and the ratings were especially high from those who had received service from or had an experience with EMSA.
- When asked about management and billing processes, people did tend to rate EMSA lower.
- It was found there was a lack of understanding regarding the offerings and limitations of the Utility Fee Program.

Ms. Bruer stated that as a result, it was decided focus groups were needed regarding the Utility Fee Program. The focus groups (held by Littlefield Branding, Marketing and Advertising Agency) echoed what was found in the telephone survey. Results indicated that people look at EMSA as two distinct entities: 1) medics in the field, and 2) management and billing processes. The takeaway from the focus groups was that the medics are compassionate and caring, but management and billing is viewed as "sly and crafty".

EMSA wants citizens to feel that the entire organization is caring and compassionate, with patient care and our billing process. We want people to trust EMSA and know that we care about our patients.

The research also reflected that citizens are well aware the Utility Fee Program exists, but fewer are aware as to whether they are opted in to the program or not. Only about 33% of the respondents knew they were opted in, when in fact about 90% of Tulsa households are opted in.

As a result of the survey and the focus groups, EMSA is suggesting the following steps be taken:

- Rebrand the name TotalCare to EMSACare. The name TotalCare is somewhat confusing to citizens and has no real connection with EMSA. It sounds much like "Medicare" or an insurance product. The new name will be used system-wide, and the cost to change the name will be minimal, perhaps \$2,000.

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- Go broader with direct mail. Currently EMSA sends out water bill inserts and a postcard, both at renewal time. EMSA would like to have direct mail on a more year-round basis for public awareness throughout the year.
- Enact membership cards for those opted into the program in Tulsa. The card is not for EMSA's use; rather it is to help make the citizens aware they are in the program. Cards would only be distributed in Tulsa, and would be mailed out each July after the renewal period, as well as to new members who join throughout the year.

Dr. Rodgers asked if the Board needs to approve the name change to EMSACare. Mr. Bird feels the Board should vote on the change. Ms. Perryman indicated that the name change cannot be voted on today, as it is not a formal item on the agenda. The vote would not be able to take place until May 22.

Ms. Bruer explained that the direct mail items currently being discussed are for the upcoming June renewal period. The name change can be delayed, but water bill inserts must go out soon. After the new fiscal year begins (July 1), year-round education and awareness ads for TV and bus shelters will be produced. Membership cards will also be deferred to the next fiscal year's budget.

Mr. Bird asked how much money is typically spent on communications and public relations regarding the Utility Fee Program in Oklahoma City. Ms. Bruer estimated it is less than \$10,000 annually. The city of Oklahoma City handles their Utility Fee Program themselves and is responsible for the decisions and costs regarding the communication of the program to the citizens. They currently send colored postcards once a year at enrollment time, and that is all they do. Ms. Bruer has offered to assist Oklahoma City each year with their communications, but they have always declined. EMSA takes care of the costs related to the western division TotalCare direct subscribers, but the number of direct subscribers is minimal compared to those enrolled in the Utility Fee Program.

Mr. Bird questioned why we feel the need to spend so much more money in Tulsa. Ms. Bruer explained that the recent research was done at the City's request to better educate the citizens of Tulsa regarding the Utility Fee Program. What that research shows is that the average citizen does not understand how the program works. People are surprised to learn EMSA bills their insurance. As a result of that finding, Littlefield has come up with a "tagline" that helps explain the fact insurance is billed.

The committee continued to discuss the various differences between the programs of Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the subsidiary cities. Ms. Bruer explained that each

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city's government has the authority to decide if they want to participate in the program and how their participation will be set up; that is, how much to charge for the program, options for opting in or out, etc.

Discussion also ensued regarding multi-family units in Tulsa and the fact that many of them are not informing their tenants of the program, whether the complex is opted in or out, or giving them the proper paperwork. The city of Tulsa is preparing a process to better enforce the rules which multi-family units are supposed to follow.

Ms. Perryman then asked a question regarding the planned \$500,000 amount listed on the presentation. Ms. Bruer explained that \$200,000 of the \$500,000 was already approved by the Board to spend this fiscal year on marketing. The new fiscal year budget is proposed to be \$300,000. That amount will be included in EMSA's total 2014 budget, which will go before the Board for approval in the next couple of months.

Mr. Bird stated that if the intent of the communications plan is to educate the citizens, the citizens of Oklahoma City are being done a disservice if they do not receive the same type of education materials. If the reason the eastern division wants to provide more education is in response to negative press, Mr. Bird hesitates to spend money on the plan.

Ms. Bruer stated that EMSA wants to prevent the number of opt-outs from growing due to fear from articles in the paper, and feels the communications materials being considered will help the public understand the program. She believes the new wording created by Littlefield for the brochures, inserts and postcards will help. The new tagline is, "Whether insurance covers a little, a lot, or nothing at all for emergency medical services, EMSA TotalCare covers what insurance doesn't.

This statement will be used by all of the cities who use a Utility Fee Program – Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the subsidiary cities, as well.

Ms. Perryman suggested EMSA use some different innovative methods, other than the typical inserts and postcards, for educating the public. She asked about the possibility of having a commercial with people who can tell their own stories, explaining what TotalCare did for them as a family, to champion our cause.

Ms. Bruer agreed and stated she will also pursue news coverage and appear on the local talk shows. That type of coverage can be done at renewal time, but for year-round education, it will need to be supplemented with paid media.

Mr. Bird brought up the possibility that by spending a significant sum, if done in response to the Tulsa World articles, we might be doing just the thing EMSA has

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been criticized for in the past; that is, unnecessary spending. Ms. Bruer answered that the communications plan is in response to requests from the Tulsa City Council and the results of the survey and focus groups.

Mr. Bird replied that the council might not have realized how much money this type of public education costs, and he is somewhat concerned that a story could be printed criticizing the amount of money EMSA is spending on public relations.

Ms. Bruer stated that the education of the public is to protect the people who are the most vulnerable. She wants the media outlets and information to reach the lower educated, lower income audience, as they are the ones who will be hurt the most if they don't understand the program.

Dr. Rodgers stated that he continues to feel it important that good articles regarding patient care and the great strides made by Dr. Goodloe and the operations side of the system make their way into the newspapers and other media outlets. The upcoming use of tranexamic acid is a great example.

Ms. Bruer agrees, and has recently scheduled interviews on the use of tranexamic acid and hopes to have a story come out in the next few weeks.

Ms. Perryman thinks the Board members from the eastern division need to think about the communications plan and decide if they want to spend this amount of money. She agrees with Mr. Bird that the spending could be brought up in the media and EMSA could be criticized for it.

The discussion turned to a recap of all that had been discussed during the meeting today, and how to succinctly sum it up for the committee report to the Board at the 1:00 pm meeting. Everyone agreed that a part of the communications plan had been set in motion and approved for this year's budget, and that decisions still need to be made for next fiscal year's budget.

2. Adjourn

The Special Meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm.