

CCATO Spring Conference

Municipalities and the Dynamically Evolving EMS and Mental Health Sectors



Charles "Chaz" Brogan, President

Chester County EMS Council, Inc.

- Comprised of EMS agencies, EMS consumers, hospitals, allied health, and public safety agencies having a **vested interest in the provision of emergency medical services.**
- Our purpose is to “**serve as a uniformed voice of EMS** in providing advice and recommendations to local and county governments, EMS agencies, consumers, and other emergency services entities to promote the maintenance and improvement of the EMS system and public safety in Chester County, PA.”
- The Council works in close collaboration with the Chester County Department of Emergency Services daily on matters impacting emergency medical services in Chester County, PA.



Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- In Chester County:
 - Majority are fire company based
 - One hospital based
 - Some independent agencies
- Unlike police and some fire services, most EMS organizations are generally not tax based.
- Users (insurers) are billed for service



Where Are We Today?

- Hospital closures have further stretched Chester County's EMS Agencies
- Increased expenses
 - Longer transports & wall times – fuel, maintenance, supplies, medications
 - Rising pay rates to recruit/retain EMS providers
 - Continual decrease in volunteer EMS providers
- More reliance on mutual aid
 - Staffing challenges
 - Increased transport times
 - Increased wall times
- Increased EMS provider stress – increased focus on mental health
 - Longer transports, longer wait times
 - Inflation / pay rates
 - Increased risk of provider injury



Where Are We Today?

- Communication & Collaboration
 - Working with several County departments and all hospitals to mitigate hospital closure impacts and share information
 - Weekly meetings
 - EMS Council is working closely with all of the other first responder associations in Chester County
 - Many EMS agencies are working together and supporting each other more than ever

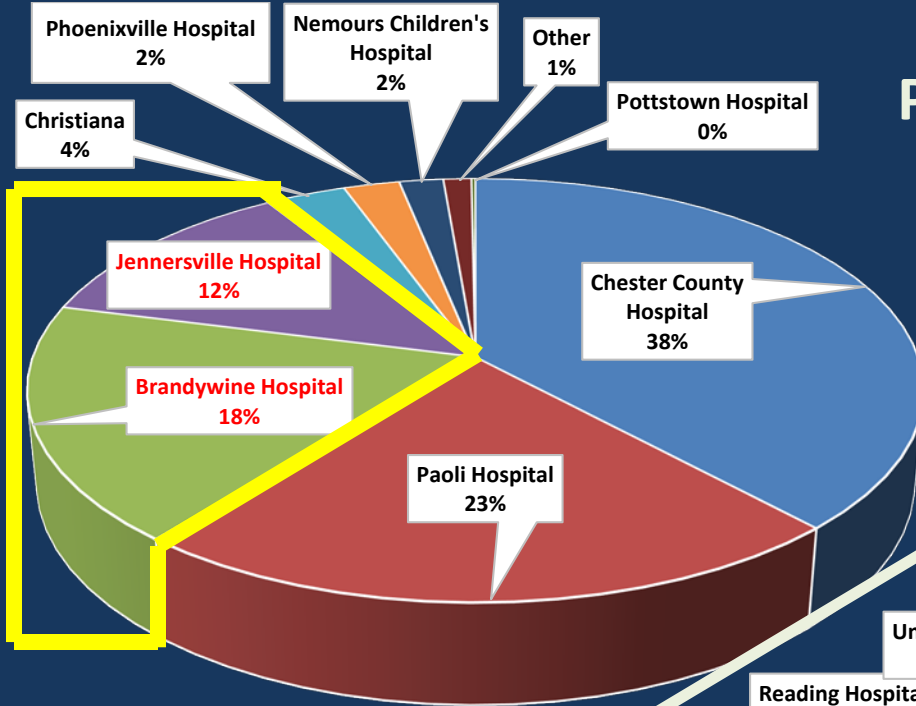


Hospital Destination

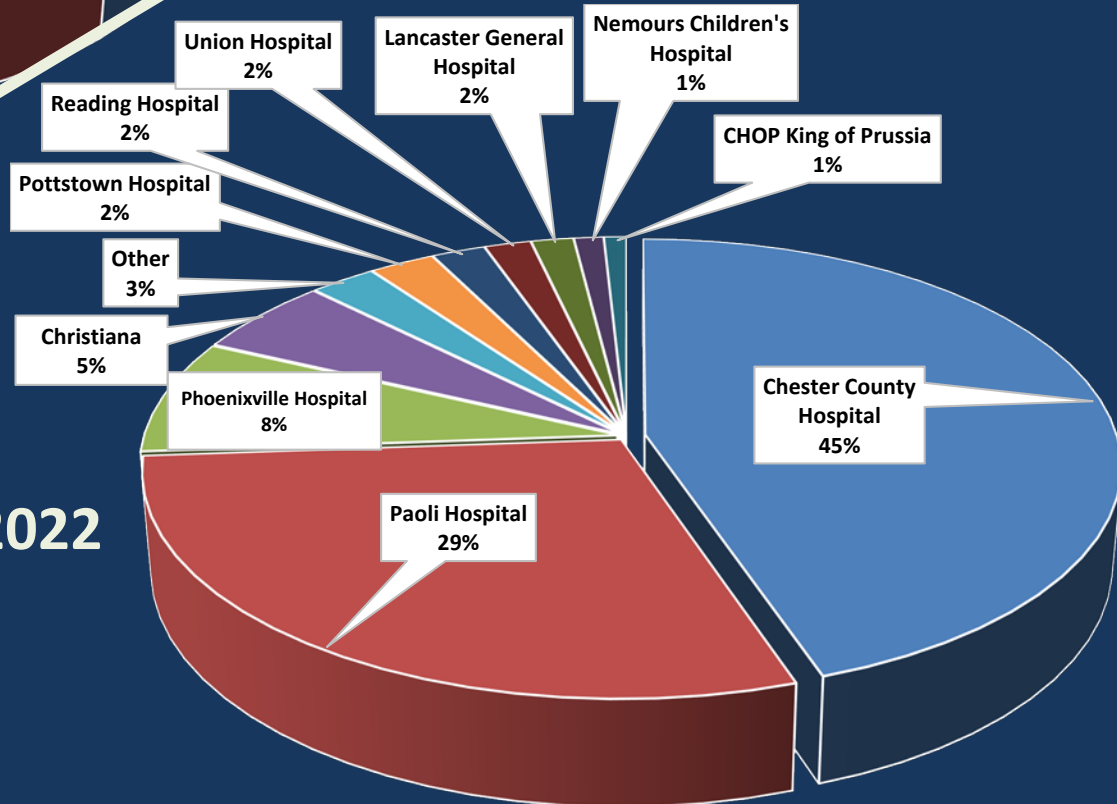
- Determined by multiple factors:
 - Patient condition
 - Need for specialized services (trauma, burn, pediatric)
 - Patient request
 - Hospital status (High Patient Volume or Divert)
- Providers always try to accommodate the patient's hospital request when possible.



Pre Hospital Closures 2021

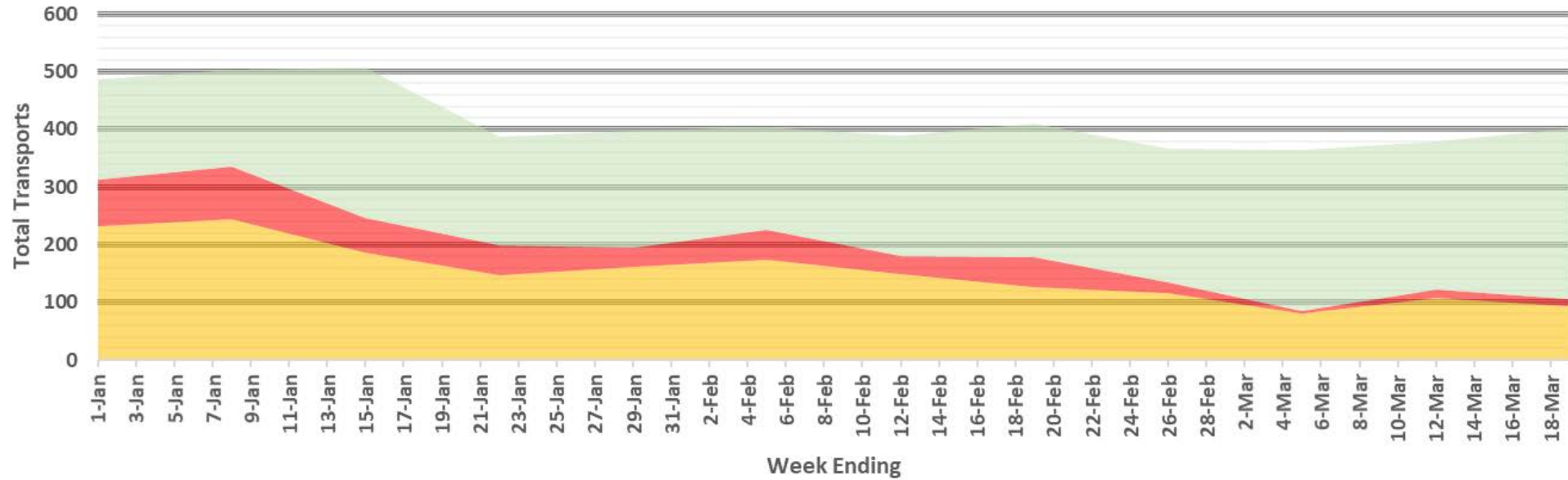


Post Hospital Closures 2022



EMS Volume & Wall Time

Total Transports and Wall Times



- The “healthcare surge” appears to be improving
- Overall EMS wall time is decreasing

Behavioral Health

- Increases in behavioral health EMS calls
- EMS wall time is directly impacted by 1:1 behavioral health patients in the emergency rooms
 - Available rooms & staffing
- Behavioral health patients are being boarded in emergency rooms until they can be placed in an inpatient facility
 - Days to weeks
 - Pediatric behavioral health
- Creating safety concerns inside of our emergency departments
- Moving in a positive direction on BH needs



EMS Staffing in Chester County

80% of agencies report difficulty recruiting new EMS providers

57% of agencies report 3 or less current openings

26% of agencies report 4 to 6 current openings

13% of agencies report more than 7 current openings

EMS Expenses

- Expenses continue to outrun billing revenue
 - Salaries climbing rapidly
 - Inflation – vehicles, equipment, medical supplies, & medications
- Increased expenses related to hospital closures
- Insurance costs rising



Insurance Reimbursement

- Reimbursements remain fixed by Medicare and Medicaid
- Increased use of high deductible commercial plans – self pay
- Most commercial insurance plans continues to send payment to the patient
 - Patients not turning over their insurance payments to EMS agencies



Where Do We Go?

- “Someone, somewhere, should do something!”
 - Little success passing impactful EMS legislation at the state level – stuck in committees / insurance lobby
- Chester County Fire & EMS Strategic Plan
- Recruitment & retention of EMS providers
- Improvement begins at the local level
 - We need to work collaboratively at local and regional levels to find efficiencies and provide sustainable funding



Thank You!
Questions?



www.ChesCoEMS.org

