

**PINELLAS COUNTY
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
MEDICAL CONTROL BOARD**

**MEETING MINUTES
June 26, 2025**

The Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Medical Control Board met in person at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130, Largo, Florida, at 10:00 A.M. on this date with the following members present:

Dr. Matthew Smith, AdventHealth North Pinellas – Secretary
Mr. Brent Burish, HCA Florida Pasadena Hospital – Vice Chair (late)
Dr. Krista Gillis, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg
Dr. Sebastian Strom, HCA Largo Medical Center
Dr. Craig Kizewic, Mease Countryside Hospital – (Alternate)
Dr. Brian Charity, Morton Plant Hospital (Primary)
Ms. Nancy Hopkins, Morton Plant Mease Healthcare – (Alternate)
Dr. Joseph Namey, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society
Dr. Meghan Martin, Pediatric Physician

Members Not Present:

Dr. Jennifer Pearson, C.W. Bill Young V.A. Medical Center
Dr. Matt Nelson, St. Anthony's Hospital (Primary) – Chair
Dr. Stephen Feilinger, St. Anthony's Hospital (Alternate)

Staff Present:

Jim Fogarty, Bureau Director, SES
David Hare, SES
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director
Dr. Andrew Smith, OMD
Jason Ester, County Attorney's Office
Jessica McGlothlin, SES
Thomas Hund, SES
David Hudak, EMS & Fire Administration
Jennyfer Peters, EMS & Fire Administration
Marianne Merola, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics
Robb Smither, Ambulance Labor Representative
Chris Vanhecke, EMS Coordinator, Johns Hopkins

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Dr. Matthew Smith called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. Roll call was taken, and Marianne Merola determined that a quorum was present. There were nine (9) voting members in attendance.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 27, 2025 MEETING - APPROVED

Upon presentation by Dr. Smith, Dr. Joseph Namey moved, seconded by Dr. Meghan Martin and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the March 27, 2025 EMS Medical Control Board meeting be approved.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

HOSPITAL & SKILLED NURSING FACILITY PRIOR AUTHORIZATION LETTER

Craig Hare presented information regarding the protocol update of the preauthorization for non-emergency ambulance service for hospital and skilled nursing facility (SNF) discharges, sharing that the soft launch is to begin on July 1. He discussed patient impacts, EMS system costs, Medicaid/Medicare compliance issues, different patient segments and/or transport origin/destination pathways. Surrounding counties and private ambulance services have changed to requiring the preauthorization form. An upcoming meeting will be scheduled to walk through the process details. Hospital leadership would like to see the formation of a working group to discuss the situation.

Members provided input regarding concerns about how the change will be implemented; operational effects of the change; potential penalties for non-compliance; difficulties in getting preauthorizations; and impacts to patient care, transports, and staffing. Craig Hare discussed FSED, ER, hospital, and skilled nursing facility transfers; emergency transfers that would not require the preauthorization; nuances of admission/discharge details; medical necessity; and insurance/Medicaid/Medicare billing components, noting a go-live date of August 1. Mr. Fogarty indicated that he sent out a letter providing notification of and reason for the impending requirement of obtaining prior authorization for non-emergency transports.

Mr. Brent Burish suggested that a committee of hospital executives get together with County Administration to come up with a work-around solution. He asked that the implementation be delayed until a hospital committee can sit down and understand the impact and its specific roles, noting that he does not feel prepared to move forward.

Dr. Meghan Martin made a motion to delay the go-live date, seconded by Dr. Krista Gillis and unanimously approved. Mr. Fogarty indicated that he understands the delay and explained that the idea is to spend the month of July teasing through all of the details; that August 1 is the actual flip-the-switch date; and that ambulance service will not be denied, noting that the scope and the nature of the problem needs to be discussed. Mr. Burish acknowledged that Mr. Fogarty's points are clear but shared that his hospitals need more time than the month of July to review resources and prepare for the change, things are moving too quickly.

Mr. Fogarty provided a quick overview of the billing process and discussed delays with third-party payers and reimbursement timeframes, noting that the preauthorization issue is not new; and from the County's perspective, the change could be delayed until August. He relayed that the preauth depends on the type of case and the details of the trip.

Dr. Namey understands the concerns about the delay but noted that the EMS system will suffer if the preauth requirement is not implemented. Mr. Hare relayed that the process needs to be started, and a working group needs to be convened to work through the details.

Dr. Smith referred to the motion on the floor to delay, noting that it was seconded; whereupon, he amended the motion to delay the implementation of the preauthorization requirement and, in the meantime, form a hospital task force to discuss the implications thereof; and at the next Medical Control Board meeting, the group will discuss the findings of that task force and discuss whether to move to forward at that time. Dr. Krista Gillis seconded the amended motion. Upon call for the vote, the amended motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Hare thanked the members for their continued collaboration.

CLINICAL UPDATES

Dr. Jameson asked that the Clinical Update approvals be deferred until after Craig Hare presents the Response Planning Committee item.

RESPONSE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Mr. Hare introduced Michelle Slawinski, Safety and Emergency Services Data Analyst, and discussed her work with the Data Drive Focus Group and Response Planning Committee. He summarized the purpose of the Committee, noting months were spent reviewing all the various data responses to improve resource allocation with the goal of ensuring the appropriate units are dispatched to the right place at the right time.

Ms. Slawinski conducted a presentation titled *Medical Control Board Response Plan Subcommittee Brief* and provided an overview of its work to focus on enhancing emergency medical dispatch (EMD) protocols and unit deployment strategies to support system-wide improvements and deliver exceptional patient care, review priorities, and recommendations. Richard Schomp discussed Sunstar's direct involvement in and overall commitment to the project, noting that the recommendations will allow adjustment to the system to allow Sunstar to have more ALS unit hours at the right place at the right time.

Mr. Brent Burish moved, seconded by Dr. Joseph Namey and carried unanimously, that the Medical Control Board Response Plan Subcommittee's recommendations be approved.

a. Approval Items

- **Volume 2 Administrative - Effective July 9, 2025 - APPROVED**
 - Protocol Updates
 - AD2 911 Call Processing and Response Assignment

Dr. Jameson referred to pages 24-27 of the agenda packet and provided an overview of the three changes to the protocol update.

Dr. Brian Charity moved, seconded by Dr. Joseph Namey, that the update to AD2 911 Call Processing and Response Assignment be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- **Volume 3 Critical Care Team – Effective July 9, 2025 - APPROVED**

- Protocol Updates
 - CCT-N3 Intracranial Hemorrhage
 - CCT-T2 Head Trauma
 - CCT-AD3 Likepak15 Alarms
 - CCT-F23 3% Sodium Chloride

Dr. Jameson referred to pages 28 - 34 of the agenda packet and provided an overview of the protocol updates, and discussion ensued on the four Critical Care Team protocol updates.

Dr. Craig Kizewic moved, seconded by Dr. Brian Charity, that the updates to CCT-N3 Intracranial Hemorrhage, CCT-T2 Head Trauma, CCT-AD3 Likepak15 Alarms, and CCT-F23 3% Sodium Chloride be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- **Volume 2 Administrative – *Effective October 1, 2025* - DEFERRED**

- Protocol Updates
 - AD24 Sapphire Infusion Pump Clinical Configuration (to be brought back for approval at the September 19, 2025 MCB meeting.)

- **Volume 1 Clinical Operating Guidelines – *Effective October 1, 2025* - APPROVED**

- Protocol Updates
 - CP35 IV Infusion Pump
 - CT31 Infusion Pump Quickstart Guide (procedures to follow)
 - CTxx Interfacility Infusion Safe Handoff (procedures to follow)
 - U1 Universal
 - CT7 Epinephrine Drip Infusion
 - CT8 Norepinephrine Drip Infusion
 - CT24 Interfacility Transport Levels of Care
 - M4 Suspected Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA)
 - AD19 First Pass User Guide

Dr. Jameson indicated the *Volume 2 Administrative* and *Volume 1 Clinical Operating Guidelines* protocol updates go together in relation to an improvement project underway, noting he is asking for leeway to finalize the training procedure as the device is not yet in hand. He will bring the pump for member viewing at the September MCB meeting.

Dr. Jameson asked for approval of the packet with a few placeholders in it for things that can't be nailed down until the device is received next month, noting plans to deploy the Sapphire Infusion pump on all Sunstar ALS ambulances on October 1, 2025.

Dr. Jameson referred to pages 35 to 47 and provided a summarization of the protocol updates. He asked for feedback and support from the group for CT24 Interfacility Transport Levels of Care, noting the difference between the parameters of the Critical Care Paramedic and the Advanced Life Support (ALS) regarding nitro drips and pressors, again asking for leeway to finalize the clinical tools and the handoff procedures once the device is in hand.

Following discussion, Nancy Hopkins moved, seconded by Dr. Brian Charity, that protocol updates CP35 IV Infusion Pump, CT31 Infusion Pump Quickstart Guide, CTxx Interfacility Infusion Safe Handoff, U1 Universal, CT7 Epinephrine Drip Infusion, CT8 Norepinephrine Drip Infusion, and CT24 Interfacility Transport Levels of Care be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- **Volume 1 Clinical Operating Guidelines – *Effective October 1, 2025* - APPROVED**

- Protocol Updates (continued)
 - M4 Suspected Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA)
 - AD19 First Pass User Guide

Dr. Jameson referred to pages 48 - 81 of the agenda packet and provided an overview of the protocol updates regarding ePCR stroke documentation and the First Pass software system user guide. Dr. Charity relayed his appreciation for the stroke quality measures.

Following discussion, Dr. Craig Kizewic moved, seconded by Dr. Krista Gillis, that protocol updates M4 Suspected Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA) and AD19 First Pass User Guide be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

b. Report/Discussion Items

- Freestanding ED (FSED) Utilization
 - Dr. Jameson noted no significant changes in utilization patterns at this point. He can reconvene FSED Subcommittee to take another look or, if the group prefers, keep monitoring the volume patterns, noting the subcommittee did meet 2 years ago to review the clinical protocols about what types of patients are most appropriate for the FSEDs, and there was no recommendation for a protocol change at that point.
 - Craig Hare discussed requests to Sunstar from hospital systems about increasing volume and noted that it's really not the clinical protocol but more patient choice.
 - Following discussion pertaining to providing additional training support for the field, there was no recommendation to reconvene the group or change criteria for FSEDs.
- RAMP Triage Update
 - RAMP Triage final exercise recently held in Clearwater went well, happy with rollout.
 - Adult and Pediatric study presentations given at the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine was well received.
 - Received validation on Active Assailant RAMP Rescue Corridor response presentations at the Florida Statewide meeting two weeks ago. Hopeful that ideas presented may be seen in national standards.
 - Refinement and updating of Hospital Support Plan regarding resource support to location affected.
 - Complete refresh of entire Countywide MCI Plan. Noting intense work on response to Active Assailant events in the last year and a half has gone quite well. MCI Plan is under County Emergency Management. RAMP Triage pieces worked well on the Clearwater Ferry Boat crash from a clinical standpoint.
 - Craig Hare discussed patient tracking by transport color code/PD witness/self-transport. Possibility of our concept of Rescue Corridor going to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA 3000). Holding Countywide drill at Clearwater High School the end of July to include Family Reunification support.

- Blood (LTWB) Project
 - Tough budget cycle for getting desired improvements, working towards getting a layer of Low Titer Whole Blood available by ground across the system.
 - Goal is to have blood project on the road before the end of the year, likely have a couple of units in south, middle, and north Pinellas County to go to scene or rendezvous with an en route truck.
 - Noted that greater than 50 percent of utilizations are not among trauma patients. Medical issue patients are receiving more prehospital whole blood due to hemorrhage/dialysis fistula disasters/GI bleeds.
 - May ask for member support, particularly in dealing with OneBlood, going through process. National standards have just been updated that endorse prehospital use of blood products. Planning for successful rollout.
 - \$150k EMS Grant for refrigerators and blood warmers. Deployment approach to be Rescue Lieutenant and EMS Supervisor overlay.
- Definition of a Patient
 - Dr. Jameson indicated he did not receive much feedback from draft language regarding *CS1 Definition of a Patient* and is currently at the stage of benchmarking against other EMS systems to make tweaks. Anticipates being able to update the broad “definition of a patient” hopefully before the beginning of next year.
- Patient Specific Action Plan Discussion
 - Dr. Jameson noted that the pilot program contact for the action plan program has passed away.
 - Anyone interested in participating in the pilot program to reduce resources expended by high-utilizer patients can reach out to Dr. Jameson.

EMS SYSTEM UPDATE

Craig Hare provided an overview of the following topics:

- Mission Lifeline
 - The American Heart Association has recognized Pinellas County as a gold-level awardee again this year. Most of our fire departments received gold/silver/bronze recognitions, depending on specific measures and volume.
 - Thanked SES Data Analyst Michelle Slawinski and Sunstar Clinical Manager Shelby Papa for their solid work on data submission.
- Budget
 - Jim Fogarty conducted a budget presentation for the Board of County Commissioners for next year’s package.
 - Overall costs are up 10.5% for First Responders, noting property values are up 4%. Holding off on any type of enhancements to ensure existing service coverage and to balance budget through a six-year financial forecast. Will continue to work with Fire and EMS Chiefs over the next year regarding training, mentoring, and support of the young work force.
 - Working with Seminole in terms of financial operations, noting increased costs of a new fire station.
 - A couple of field supervisors to North County and South Beaches were added this year.

- Started a new quarterly Rescue Lieutenants (LR) group to share best practices on field supervision with Sunstar supervisors.
- Water Rescue Update
 - The Pinellas County Sheriff and Fire Chiefs met to improve Water Rescue coordination during hurricanes. A small working group was created, consisting of Sheriff's dispatch and EMS & Fire/9-1-1 Center Administration. Plans to continue to immediately dispatch Fire Rescue for operations. Looking to add working group inside of County EOC to monitor calls for duplication and deconfliction, ensuring proper call dispatch.
 - Adding a PCSO representative to South Beaches' EOC to improve and increase coordination.
- ACLS Training
 - About 1/3 of the way through ACLS training for 1000+ paramedics. Thanked members for their support of the American Red Cross training, noting a 97% success rate for field clinicians.
- Madeira Beach/Redington Beach EMS Center Groundbreaking
 - Ceremony being held tomorrow, Friday, June 27, 2025, with Madeira Beach for the Redington Beach EMS station, in front of North Redington Beach Town Hall.
- New Fire Stations
 - Clearwater Station 47 moved to Gulf-to-Bay and Belcher location, including an engine, rescue, rescue squad, and safety officer.
 - Largo Station 39 expected to be operational within the next month.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next Medical Control Board meeting is set for Thursday, September 18, 2025, at the John Morroni EMS & Fire Administration Building, 12490 Ulmerton Road, Conference Room 130, Largo, Florida, at 10:00 A.M. Meeting to be in person.

OPEN FORUM

Dr. Jameson shared the following updates:

- New Sepsis Alert criteria and Severe Hypertension in Pregnancy Pre-Eclampsia/Eclampsia protocols are scheduled to go-live on July 9.
- Dr. Jeffrey Darko has officially graduated from his EMS Fellowship.
- Dr. Morgan Uebelacker is the new EMS Fellow and starts next week, July 1, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion by Dr. Strom and seconded by Ms. Hopkins, Chair Nelson adjourned the meeting at 11:54 A.M.

Audio and any correspondence received for this meeting is on file at the Pinellas County EMS & Fire Administration.