

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

**MEETING MINUTES
September 18, 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. Matt Nelson, St. Anthony's Hospital (Primary) – Chair
Dr. Matthew Smith, AdventHealth North Pinellas (Primary) – Secretary
Dr. Krista Gillis, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg (Primary)
Mr. Ralph "Rocky" Ricapito, HCA Florida Pasadena Hospital (Alternate)
Ms. Diane Conti, HCA Largo Medical Center (Alternate)
Dr. Roberto Bellini, Mease Countryside Hospital (Primary)
Dr. Brian Charity, Morton Plant Hospital (Primary)
Dr. Hasan Rasheed, Morton Plant Hospital (Alternate)
Mr. Matthew Novak, Morton Plant Mease Healthcare (Primary)
Ms. Nancy Hopkins, Morton Plant Mease Healthcare (Alternate)

Members Not Present:

Dr. Jennifer Pearson, C.W. Bill Young V.A. Medical Center
Dr. Meghan Martin, Pediatric Physician
Dr. Joseph Namey, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society – (Primary)
Dr. Anthony Ottaviani, Pinellas County Osteopathic Medical Society – (Alternate)

Staff Present:

Jim Fogarty, Bureau Director, SES
David Hare, Deputy Director, SES
Craig Hare, Director, EMS & Fire Administration
Jodie Sechler, Director, Ambulance Billing and Financial Services
Pam Bell, Regulatory Compliance Manager, Ambulance Billing and Financial Services
Dr. Angus Jameson, Medical Director
Dr. Michael Lozano, OMD
Dr. Andrew Smith, OMD
Dr. Morgan Uebelacker, OMD
Patrick Allman, County Attorney's Office
Jessica McGlothlin, SES
Thomas Hund, SES
David Hudak, EMS & Fire Administration
Lynn Abbott, EMS & Fire Administration
Marianne Merola, EMS & Fire Administration

Also Present:

Karen Macauley, Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital

Richard Schomp, Sunstar Paramedics
Jazmin Soloman, Sunstar Paramedics
Dr. Sarah Stutz, USF Resident

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Dr. Matt Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. Roll call was taken, and Lynn Abbott determined that a quorum was present. There were nine (9) voting members in attendance.

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 26, 2025 MEETING - APPROVED

Upon presentation by Dr. Nelson, Mr. Matthew Novak moved, seconded by Dr. Roberto Bellini and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the June 26, 2025 EMS Medical Control Board meeting be approved.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

There were no citizens to be heard.

PRE-AUTHORIZATION PRESENTATION

Jim Fogarty indicated that the implementation date for the preauthorization for non-emergency ambulance service for hospital and skilled nursing facility (SNF) discharges has been changed to November 1, noting that the preauthorization requirement is more of a business-related issue than a clinical issue; that there has been a substantial reduction in the number of non-emergency transports from hospitals since July; and that the issue that has been around for a while.

Mr. Fogarty indicated that the issue will be presented tomorrow to the EMS Advisory Council and the Board of County Commissioners at their October 2 workshop, adding that the County Administrator and Board members have an interest in more fully understanding the issue. He attended a meeting yesterday where it was found that almost 900 insured patients were denied payment and sent to collections in June.

Jodie Sechler, Director of Financial Services, and Pam Bell, Regulatory Compliance Manager, conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *Prior Authorization Issue Overview* and delivered a briefing of the following topics:

- General Information. Sunstar will not refuse a request.
- Current Impacts.
- Sunstar Non-Emergency Transportation Volume.
- Recent Actions to address this Issue.
- Challenges to Ambulance Prior Authorization.
- Potential Solutions.

During the presentation, Ms. Bell, with input by Ms. Sechler, and Messrs. Fogarty and C. Hare, discussed the key points, as follows:

- Financial impacts/program costs.
- Transport origin/destination pathways and preauthorization/billing processes.
- Medicaid/Medicare Part C/commercial insurance non-emergency transport criteria and billing policies.
- Continuing Sunstar transport data compilation.
- Challenges faced by hospitals/Sunstar in getting preauthorization approval.

- Citizen accounts in collections/payment plans to avoid collection services.
- Sabal Palms Children's Rehabilitation Center's non-emergency transport violations.
- Meeting and working with all facilities to resolve issues.

Following lengthy discussion, members relayed the following concerns:

- How will the preauthorization change will be implemented?
- What will be the operational effects of the change?
- Difficulty in understanding the scope of the problem due to the lack of data down to the minute level.
- Impacts to patient care and safety due to the potential 3-day preauthorization approval process.
- The need for a hospital/County task force to quantify the problem and create a solution that works for the best interest of all.

Mr. Fogarty indicated that the County wanted to present information on the current situation and does not expect a vote today, reiterating the implementation date for the required preauthorization for non-emergency ambulance service for hospital and skilled nursing facility (SNF) discharges is planned for November 1. Mr. C. Hare shared that the workgroup would continue to meet with Dave Hare and hospitals to work towards a solution, thanking the members for their continued collaboration.

CLINICAL UPDATES

Dr. Jameson displayed documents titled *2025 September MCB Executive Summary - DRAFT* and *2025 September MCB Protocol Pack - DRAFT* and provided the following clinical updates:

a. Approval Items

- **Individual Protocol Updates - APPROVED**
 - CS1 – Definition of a Patient
 - P6 – Peds Bradycardia
 - M4/AD19 – Stroke Quality Measures

Dr. Jameson referred to the Executive Summary and page 1 of the protocol packet and provided information regarding the revision to the *CS1 – Definition of a Patient* protocol; whereupon, Dr. Krista Gillis moved, seconded by Dr. Brian Charity, that the revised *CS1 – Definition of a Patient* protocol be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

Referring to the Executive Summary and pages 2 and 3 of the protocol packet, Dr. Jameson presented an outline of the changes to the *P6 – Pediatric Bradycardia* protocol, noting the addition of the second bullet point and the note about pediatric arrests being respiratory in origin/when to consider starting chest compressions in an older child in the safety alert box at the beginning of the protocol; whereupon, Dr. Hasan Rasheed moved, seconded by Dr. Matthew Smith, that the update to *P6 – Pediatric Bradycardia* protocol be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Jameson referred to the Executive Summary and pages 4 through 37 of the protocol packet and provided an overview of the changes to the *M4 Suspected Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA)/AD19 First Pass User Guide – Stroke Quality Measures* protocols; whereupon, Dr. Matt Nelson moved, seconded by Dr. Matthew Smith, that the updates to *M4 Suspected Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA)/AD19 First Pass User Guide – Stroke Quality Measures* protocols be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

- **Multiple Protocol Packages - APPROVED**

- Sapphire Pump Protocol Package (10/1/2025 Implementation)
- Prehospital Low Titer Whole Blood Protocol Package

Referring to the Executive Summary and pages 38 through 84 of the protocol packet, Dr. Jameson provided an overview of the *Sapphire Infusion Pump Package*, adding that training is more than halfway done. He discussed pump setup, EPI drip concentrations/formats, post-medical cardiac arrest, and the deployment strategy of the Fusion pumps on ALS Sunstar interfacility transport units only, noting that the pumps will not be limited from use on a 9-1-1 call.

Following discussion, Dr. Matthew Smith moved, seconded by Dr. Matt Nelson, that the *Sapphire Pump Protocol Package* be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Jameson referred to the Executive Summary and pages 85 through 111 of the protocol packet and presented a summary of the *Prehospital Low Titer Whole Blood Protocol Package*. He discussed the history of its deployment in the prehospital arena, EMS standards promulgated for blood delivery, partnership with OneBlood in getting blood to the field, and deployment approach utilizing a Rescue Lieutenant and EMS Supervisor overlay. More than 50 percent of utilizations are medical patients receiving more prehospital whole blood due to GI bleeds and hemorrhage/dialysis fistula disasters.

Following brief discussion, Dr. Matt Nelson moved, seconded by Dr. Krista Gillis, that the *Prehospital Low Titer Whole Blood Protocol Package* be approved. Upon call for the vote, the motion was approved unanimously.

b. Report/Discussion Items

- Airway Management Protocol Updates/Planning
 - Dr. Jameson shared his concerns regarding inadequate endotracheal/laryngoscope training for paramedics in school that is leading to a continued degradation of intubation skills, noting the re-evaluation of a significant protocol packet that will focus on training and maintaining currency for our clinicians. He discussed the importance of following NEMSQA policy measures and driving quality improvement activities systemwide, noting that the goal is to have optimal conditions for defect-free airway care.
- Interviews are being conducted for next year's EMS Fellow.
- Upcoming State EMS meeting at the Florida Center for EMS at CAMLS in Tampa.

- NAEMSP meeting at the Tampa Marriott in January. Registration should be open by the end of September.

EMS SYSTEM UPDATE

Craig Hare provided an overview of the following topics:

- Hospital Information Hub (HIH)
 - On final approach with the EMS/Hospital data share project.
 - Two agreements have been signed.
- ACLS
 - Finishing up ACLS with the American Red Cross, training went well.
- Staffing
 - Sean Davenport has been promoted to Clinical Services Manager from the EMS Academy Coordinator position.
 - Former Pinellas Park Fire Chief Brett Schlatterer has been hired as the Fire Operations Manager, start date is September 22, 2025.
- ALS First Responder Amendment
 - Amendment with the Cities and Fire Districts are moving forward at a rapid pace. Working on only a couple agreements with minor issues.
 - St. Petersburg is adding 8 paramedics, for a total of 24 new positions over 3 years.
 - Plans to hold back on system enhancements to keep finances balanced.
 - Noted upcoming Data Driven Focus Group discussion regarding EMS Supervision and Advanced Practice Paramedics.
- Ambulance Contract
 - In the second year of the Sunstar contract, noting an investment of \$5 million in new ambulances.
- New Fire Chiefs
 - Chief Chad Pittman has been hired as the new Fire Chief for Clearwater Fire & Rescue.
 - Chief Michael Handoga has been promoted to Dunedin Fire Department Fire Chief.
 - Chief Matt Carpenter is the new Fire Chief for Largo Fire Rescue, and Chief Terry Tokarz is the Deputy Fire Chief.
- Plans to go out to bid on a new Learning Management System to revamp the online training component.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next Medical Control Board meeting is set for Thursday, December 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

No Open Forum topics discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Nelson adjourned the meeting at 11:55 A.M.

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