



Chairperson
Lisa A. Drago, DO, FAAP
Pediatric Emergency Medicine Physician

**The Governor's Emergency Medical Services
for Children Advisory Council**

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for Children Advisory Council
Minutes of March 31, 2026**

Members Present: Dr. Navin Ariyaprakai, Ms. Debra Bell, Dr. Frank Castello, Dr. Angela D'Alessandro, Ms. Maureen Donnelly, Dr. Lisa Drago, Mr. Daniel Sullivan

Members Absent: Dr. Maya Baas, Ms. Kelly Boyd, Dr. Jeanne Craft, Dr. Louis Difazio, Dr. Ernest Leva, Dr. Mark McCollum, Dr. Neil Miele, Mr. John Napolitano, Dr. Nilesh Patel, Dr. Anderson Richard, Ms. Denise Serbay, Ms. Sonia Rita, Ms. Marvella Cephas

Guests/Attendees: Mr. Michael Copeland, Dr. Richard Flyer, Ms. Angela Kim, Mr. Ronald Murphy, Ms. Sarai Ramirez, Mr. Bruce Ruck, Dr. Adam Sivitz

Dept. of Health: Mr. Eric Hicken, Mr. Daniel Kazar, Ms. Fatima Manzoor, Mr. Timothy Seplaki, Mr. Bruce Tretheway

The Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Advisory Council convened virtually on March 31, 2026, via Microsoft Teams, with a call to order at 10:00 AM by Dr. Drago

CORRESPONDENCE

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the December 2025 meeting were distributed to the members of the council via email before this meeting and were voted on for approval

Motion to approve the December 2025 meeting minutes (Dr. Drago). Seconded (Mr. Sullivan). Approved (Unanimous)

INTRODUCTIONS

New attendees introduced themselves

COMMITTEE/SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Chairperson's Report – Dr. Drago

- Mobile Intensive Care Advisory Council (MAC) Meeting Updates
 - No update
- New Jersey EMS Council Meeting Updates
 - No update
- Culture of Safety
 - Dr. Drago reported continued discussion on
 - Safe transport of pediatric patients
 - Development and implementation of guide cards
 - Ongoing challenges with advancing guide card usage
- Child Abuse Prevention / Task Force Update
 - Formerly the Race, Poverty, and Neglect Subgroup
 - Now aligned under broader poverty and neglect outcomes work
 - New child abuse prevention education program
 - Currently in pilot phase
 - Two-day training format
 - Feedback collection in progress
 - Statewide rollout planned following evaluation
- Pediatric Readiness

- Emergency Department (ED) Pediatric Readiness Assessment is now open

Department of Health – Division of Disaster Preparedness, Resiliency, and Emergency Medical Services (DPREMS)

- Welcome extended to new Commissioner Dr. Raynard Washington
- Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Update – Mr. Kazar
 - Mr. Kazar reported that the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) regulations were adopted via special adoption (February 2026)
 - Executive Order #7 issued:
 - 90-day moratorium on regulations/proposals
 - Delays public comment period
 - Regulations remain active but pending further process
 - Mr. Kazar reported Virtua Health to be the first licensed MIH agency in New Jersey
 - The Regional Health Transformation (RHT) grant will be focusing on MIH blood administration and guide card development.
 - Morris County was granted the first approval for Nerve agent waiver for BLS agencies.
- The National Conference on EMS and Awards Program – Mr. Seplaki
 - Mr. Seplaki reported that the National Conference on EMS dates for 2026 will be November 18–21, 2026
 - Call for speakers open and will close on March 31, 2026
 - Need for increased pediatric-focused submissions
 - Awards Program: Celebrated the 25th anniversary

- The EMS Awards Program is now open for submission
- Encouraged to submit pediatric nominations
- SIM Competition registration is now open

Office of Disaster Resilience (ODR) EMSC – Mr. Hicken

- EMSC Grant Program
 - HRSA Notice of Award has not yet been issued
- National Prehospital Pediatric Readiness Project (PPRP) assessment
 - 2026 Assessment launched on March 3rd
 - Current Status:
 - Approx. 28–30% completion rate
 - Strong participation in North/Central NJ
 - Limited participation in South Jersey
 - Challenges:
 - Incomplete submissions
 - Need for increased outreach
- EMS Pediatric Readiness Data
 - Survey included 204 EMS agencies
 - Key Findings:
 - BLS median score: 58%
 - ALS median score: 76%
 - Slight improvement (~2%) from previous cycle
 - Results align with national averages

- Additional Notes:
 - Data limitations due to self-reporting inconsistencies
 - Variation in pediatric call volume across agencies
- N.J.A.C. 8:43G-12.1 Emergency Department and Trauma Services (Addition and Review of Pediatric Standards)
 - No update
- Improving Pediatric Acute Care through Simulation (ImPACT) ED/EMS
 - No update
- Injury Prevention Programs
 - Injury prevention initiatives continue. A replacement “Andy the Ambulance” safety demonstration unit has been ordered following damage to the previous unit
 - It is expected to be available in early 2026
 - Agencies interested in scheduling injury prevention programs for 2026 are asked to contact Ms. Manzoor or Mr. Hicken with event details
- Always Ready for Children
 - Additional EMS agencies have completed the program
 - Dr. Drago recognized Mr. Hicken and Ms. Manzoor for conducting site visits and award presentations
 - The Emergency Department program is facing challenges in completing the development of the application in the Image Trend platform
 - Novi Survey will be used as a stopgap measure until the application in Image Trend is completed
- Safe Transport of Children Committee (STC)

- Mr. Hicken reported that Phase 2 (crash testing) is expected to begin this summer
- The federal government will procure equipment after manufacturers declined participation
- Timeline:
 - Phase 2: ~1 year
 - Phase 3 (regulatory adoption): ~3 years

Family Advisory Network (FAN) Report – Mr. Hicken

- Jonas Siegel has joined the Council as a family representative. Jonas is a volunteer firefighter and parent

NEW BUSINESS

EMSC Staffing Letter of Support

- A letter of support for additional funding and staffing was shared with the council
- Request includes funding for 2 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions:
 - 50% federally funded (EMSC State Partnership Grant)
 - 50% state match required
- Request submitted in early March, currently on hold with no stated reason.
 - Request once submitted is approved by the Division leadership, Commissioner of the Department of Health and with final approval by the Governor's Office

EMSC By-Laws and Appointments Update

- Updated bylaws distributed for review
- Previous version dated back to the 1990s
- Revisions reflect:

- Changes in EMS culture
- Inclusion of new subspecialties
- Expansion of membership structure

EMSC Program Strategic Plan

- Dr. Drago reported that the development of a formal strategic plan is underway
- Initial framework has been created
- Next steps include:
 - Adding specific goals
 - Establishing timelines for implementation

OLD BUSINESS

Region 2 Pediatric Disaster Collaborative

- Dr. Lisa Drago, Region 2 includes: NJ, NY, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico
- NJ presented statewide disaster preparedness efforts
- Positive feedback received, strong recognition of NJ initiatives
- Appreciation extended to all contributors

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Ongoing frustration regarding:
 - Lack of regulatory enforcement
 - Delays in implementing pediatric care standards
- Need for:

- Pediatric Emergency Care Coordinators (PECCs) statewide
- Improved compliance and accountability

MEETING SCHEDULE

- May 19, 2026, at 10:00 AM via Microsoft TEAMS
- September 15, 2026, at 10:00 AM via Microsoft TEAMS
- December 15, 2026, at 10:00 AM via Microsoft TEAMS

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting (Dr. Drago). Seconded (Mr. Sullivan). Approved (unanimous)

This meeting was adjourned at 11:08 AM