

SOUTH DAKOTA
ACCESS CRITICAL/VULNERABLE AMBULANCE SERVICES

Beginning late in Year 01 and continuing in Year 02, the South Dakota Office of Rural Health has been engaged in working with representatives of hospitals and ambulance services to identify critical access ambulance services. This follows much the same path we took in 1991 in identifying access critical and at risk rural hospitals. *A critical access ambulance service is defined as an organized service that provides services in an area where no other similar service exists, is used by the local populace and, if closed would result in hardship for the population in need.* Measurable criteria for identifying such critical access ambulance services included:

- Distance to the next closest ambulance service;
 transports;
- Distance to closest hospital;
 and
- Shortages of medical personnel.
- Volume of emergency
- Estimated service area size;

The degree of viability or vulnerability of each service were also be examined. These included such factors as number of personnel; percent of transports that are non-emergency; and financial indicators.

Information was collected for every ambulance service and results were scored against the criteria and rank ordered from top to bottom in terms of "access critical" points and "vulnerable" points. Facilities in the top quartile for either category were judged as "high" (access critical and vulnerable); those in second quartile for both categories were judged as "above average". Likewise, those in the third quartile were "below average" and those in the bottom quartile were labeled "low".

Our purpose in identifying such facilities was to prioritize assistance in regard to our ambulance service networking initiative. We will start with the most access-critical facilities and work down the list until funds are exhausted.

Definitions:

An access-critical ambulance service is a licensed service that provides services in an area where no other similar service exists, is used by the local populace and, if closed would result in hardship for the population in need.

A vulnerable ambulance service is a licensed service that may be in danger of closure or reduction of service due to personnel shortages, financial, or other problems.

Access Critical Ambulance Services

Criteria and Standards:

- 1) Distance to the next closest provider of similar services

Standard: Distance in road miles to next closest ambulance service.

Over 35 miles	= 15 points
30 to 35 miles	= 10 points
25 to 29 miles	= 5 points
20 to 24 miles	= 7 points
15 to 19 miles	= 3 points
Under 15 miles	= 0 points

- 2) Volume of emergency transports

Standard: Annual average number of emergency transports for the past three years.

Over 140 emergency transports annually	= 15 points
81 - 140 emergency transports annually	= 12 points
56 - 80 emergency transports annually	= 9 points
36 - 55 emergency transports annually	= 6 points
21 - 35 emergency transports annually	= 3 points
under 21 emergency transports annually	= 0 points

- 3) Distance to closest hospital

Standard: Road miles to closest hospital with 24-hour emergency room.

More than 30 miles	= 7 points
15 to 30 miles	= 5 points
less than 15 miles	= 0 points

- 4) Estimated Service Area or Ambulance Service District Size

Standard: Size of service area in square miles.

1,225 square miles (35 mi. x 35 mi.) or more	= 25 points
At least 900 but less than 1,225 square miles (30mi x 30mi but <35mi x 35mi)	= 20 points
625 but less than 900 square miles (25mi x 25mi but <30mi x 30mi)	= 15 points
400 but less than 625 square miles (20mi x 20mi but <25mi x 25mi)	= 10 points
225 but less than 400 square miles	= 5 points

(>15mi x 15mi to 20mi x 20mi)
Less than 225 square miles (15mi. x 15 mi.) = 0 points

5) Shortage of Medical Personnel

Standard: Ambulance service is located in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area.

Located in a HPSA = 5 points
Not located in a HPSA = 0 points

6) Scope of Services Provided

Standard: Level of training for personnel responding to calls.

Paramedic/Special Skills = 5 points
Intermediate = 3 points
Basic only = 0 points

Vulnerable Ambulance Services

Criteria and Standards:

1) Number of Ambulance Service Personnel

Standard: Number of certified personnel available to respond to calls

0 - 6 = 25 points
7 - 12 = 20 points
13 - 18 = 10 points
19 or more = 0 points

2) Percent of Calls That are Responded to and Transported as Non-Emergency for the Past Two Years

Standard: Percent of total calls that are non-emergency transfers.

75% or more = 15 points
50% to 74% = 10 points
25% to 49% = 5 points
less than 25% = 0 points

3) Financial Data

Standard: Receipt of government subsidy during past fiscal year.

No = 5 points

Yes = 0 points

Standard: Donations are needed to operate the service.

Yes = 5 points

No = 0 points

Standard: Operating deficit/surplus during past fiscal year.

Lost more than \$1,000 = 15 points

Lost < \$1,000 = 10 points

Made < \$1,000 = 5 points

Made more than \$1,000 = 0 points

4) Declining Volume of Transports

Standard: Declining number of transports over the past six years

Avg. number down by 10% or more for past 3 years compared to first three = 10 points

Avg. number down by less than 10% for past 3 years compared to first three = 5 points

Avg. number the same or increased for the past 3 years compared to first three = 0 points

5) Age of ambulance service personnel

Standard: Average age of certified personnel for each service compared to state average age.

Average age in top quartile (oldest) = 15 points

Average age in second quartile (next oldest) = 10 points

Average age in third quartile = 5 points

Average age in last quartile (youngest) = 0 points