

## 05-26 Policy Matters

**Subject:** Supporting EMS Partnerships, Advancing Rural Health, and Impacting Communities

**Preheader:** Here, Policy Matters. Learn the latest from UPMC's Government Affairs Team.



Across communities, UPMC is working alongside clinical, community, and policy partners to strengthen access to care, advance innovation, and support the health care workforce.

This edition of *Policy Matters* highlights efforts spanning emergency medical services, community impact, rural health, and more.

Together, these efforts underscore UPMC's commitment to improving outcomes, expanding access, and building a more resilient, connected system of care.



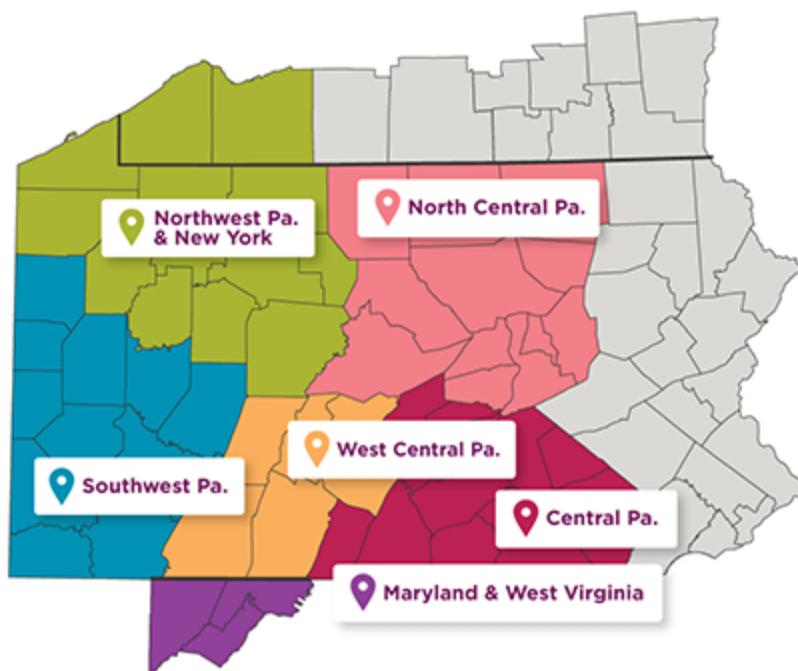
**UPMC and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Partner to Save Lives Faster**

In the most urgent moments, EMS personnel are the first to answer. They carry the responsibility of care into homes, schools, and streets across Pennsylvania.

In 2024 alone, more than 1,200 EMS agencies responded to roughly 2.4 million calls statewide, even as many face rising costs, staffing shortages, and a workforce pipeline under strain.

Through its partnerships with local EMS, UPMC is working to strengthen first-response systems, expand access to lifesaving care, and invest in new pathways to grow and sustain the workforce.

In honor of EMS Week (May 17 to 23), we recognize both the extraordinary dedication of these professionals and the growing need to support them, ensuring every community can rely on timely, high-quality emergency care when it matters most.



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## **Comprehensive Regional EMS Support**

Every day, across cities, small towns, and rural communities, EMS stands on the front lines of care. Treating more than 400,000 emergency patients each year, UPMC partners with EMS agencies across our regions to deliver care that is faster, smarter, and deeply rooted in community trust.

[Learn more about UPMC's partnerships with EMS](#)

## EMS Workforce Development & Training



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### **A New Pathway to EMS Careers: Championing Workforce Innovation**

Through Pennsylvania's first federally registered EMS apprenticeship program, Roman is beginning EMT training with McCandless-Franklin Park Ambulance Authority.

The program is funded by the Richard King Mellon Foundation and supported by UPMC Health Plan and Pathways to Work. It creates a pathway from training to full-time employment, combining real-world experience with education and certification.

This program represents an approach to supporting EMS staffing and a model with the potential to expand statewide and meet the growing need for EMS professionals across our communities.

**Watch Full Video**



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## **UPMC Celebrates 12 Freedom House Graduates Entering the Health Care Workforce**

With its expansion into Harrisburg, UPMC's Freedom House 2.0 program graduated 12 new participants, advancing a proven model for preparing skilled caregivers and future EMS professionals.

[Learn more about Freedom House 2.0](#)

## **Event Preparedness and Community Readiness**



## Ensuring Safety and Providing Care at Major Events

UPMC's partnership with EMS was central to supporting recent major events like the [NFL Draft](#) and the [Pittsburgh Marathon](#).

Through coordinated response efforts, strong collaboration with local agencies, and readiness for high-volume crowds, UPMC and its partners helped maintain attendee safety and cared for those who needed medical attention on-site. The efforts reinforced a shared commitment to public safety and community care.

## Clinical Excellence and Innovation



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### **UPMC Children's Expands Emergency Transport Services With First-Of-Its-Kind ICU on Wheels**

UPMC Children's in Harrisburg recently launched a first-of-its-kind "ICU on wheels," expanding its transport services to deliver specialized neonatal and pediatric intensive care directly to critically ill patients during ground or air transfers.

The ambulance is staffed by specially trained clinicians and equipped with advanced ICU technology. It enables care to begin at the bedside and continue while en route, improving outcomes and ensuring young patients receive highly specialized treatment as quickly as possible.

[Learn more](#)

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## **Experience with Patients Needing Trauma Care, Not Years on the Job, Saves Lives in EMS Care**

New research from UPMC and University of Pittsburgh surgeon-scientists found that severely injured patients are more likely to survive when treated by EMS clinicians with higher trauma case volume, regardless of years of experience.

The study highlights the importance of hands-on exposure. It suggests targeted strategies such as improved training, staffing models, and benchmarking to strengthen EMS performance and patient outcomes.

"Supporting EMS funding, training, and innovation at the community and policy level is how our findings translate into saved lives," says senior author Joshua Brown, MD, UPMC trauma surgeon and Samuel P. Harbison Endowed Assistant Professor of Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

**[Learn more](#)**

## Spotlighting Excellence



NAEMT.ORG

### UPMC's Tony Bixby Elected to NAEMT Board

Tony Bixby, MBA, director, Prehospital Services, UPMC in North Central Pa., and EMS chief, Susquehanna Regional EMS, was recently elected to the Board of Directors of the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (East Central Region).

Bixby brings more than 25 years of EMS experience across ground and air operations, combining clinical expertise with leadership. He holds a master's degree in health care management and is an alumnus and mentor of the NAEMT Lighthouse Leadership Program.

Bixby is also active in statewide leadership. He serves on multiple boards and leads critical care protocol work at the state level. His work includes advocating at **EMS on the Hill Day** in Washington, D.C.

Under his leadership, Susquehanna Regional EMS has earned top honors. It received the **2024 Pennsylvania EMS Agency of the Year** and the **2025 EMS World Dick Ferneau Career Service of the Year** awards.

[Learn more](#)



## Health Policy in Focus

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### Rural Health Care Initiatives

UPMC continues to advance its rural health strategy through multiple Rural Health Transformation grant submissions.

These efforts align with insights shared in a [recent \*Becker's Healthcare\* podcast](#) featuring Brendan Harris, president, UPMC *for You* and State Programs, and Patti Jackson-Gehris, president, UPMC North Central Pa. and UPMC Williamsport. Together, they highlighted key priorities, including workforce development, telehealth expansion, and innovative care models to deliver coordinated, high-quality care in rural communities.

Learn more about UPMC's commitment to rural health care

### School-Based Mental Health Funding

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and UPMC is committed to ensuring the mental well-being of all our patients and communities.

UPMC supports school-based mental health funding and is well positioned to assist. UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and UPMC Western Behavioral Health are already actively engaging with county partners, leveraging existing infrastructure, and focusing on strengthening Student Assistance Programs.



## Advocacy in Action



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## **Secretary Nancy Walker Highlights UPMC Apprenticeships Programs**

Nancy A. Walker, secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, recently visited UPMC during National Apprenticeship Week.

During her visit, Walker highlighted how registered apprenticeships are strengthening our health care workforce and opening doors to in-demand careers in western Pennsylvania.

In 2025, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry awarded \$400,000 to UPMC through Partner4Work Pittsburgh. This supported the launch of new apprenticeship programs across key clinical roles, with four programs underway by April 2026.

[Learn more](#)



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## **Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Visits UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor in Venango County**

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's administration recently visited UPMC facilities at Safe Harbor in Venango County to show support for this critical community health program.

This program has shown such promise that leaders from Pennsylvania's Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) recently highlighted the program as a model for expanding access to care, particularly in rural communities where maternal health and behavioral health resources can be limited.

"As one of only six licensed treatment facilities in Venango County, UPMC Western Behavioral Health at Safe Harbor is exactly the kind of provider we need more of, especially in rural parts of the Commonwealth where we see maternal health care deserts and other barriers to care indicative of underserved areas," says Latika Davis-Jones, PhD, secretary, DDAP.

[Learn more](#)



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## **Behavioral Health Pod at UPMC Altoona Enhances Patient Care**

UPMC Altoona recently marked the successful implementation of a behavioral health pod within its emergency department. It is designed to provide a safe, therapeutic environment for patients seeking behavioral health care.

The pod is supported by a combination of federal (secured with the help of U.S. Rep. John Joyce), state, and foundation funding. This innovative model is one of fewer than five in Pennsylvania. It has already served approximately 500 patients as it approaches its first anniversary, enhancing care delivery and patient experience in the region.

[Learn more](#)



## **Leaders Convene at UPMC Western Maryland to Advance Workforce Development**

The Maryland Department of Health, in partnership with the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) West, and UPMC Western Maryland, brought together several leaders, including Maryland Secretary of Health Meena Seshamani; U.S. Rep. April McClain Delaney; state Sen. Mike McKay; and state Delegate Terry Baker for a roundtable discussion on workforce development.



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## Expanding Access to Care – Recent Highlights

### Southwest Pa.

- [UPMC marks a decade of transforming health care in Lawrence and Mercer counties.](#)
- [UPMC Washington adds telecommunication for neurological care, and UPMC Washington expands breast care services.](#)

### Northwest Pa. and Western New York

- [UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh brings pediatric rehabilitation and orthopaedic services to Erie.](#)

### North Central Pa.

- [UPMC Pain Medicine expands services in Tioga County.](#)

### West Central Pa.

- [UPMC Hillman expands prostate cancer treatment at UPMC Altoona.](#)

### Ohio

- [UPMC reaches an agreement with CommonSpirit Health to acquire four Ohio hospitals that are currently Part of Trinity Health System.](#)



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## Caring for Communities, Every Day

- [Community partners work together to combat homelessness in Erie County.](#)
- [UPMC and Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank team up to feed community.](#)
- [UPMC hosts Ladies Day Out event in Westmoreland County.](#)

## Stay Informed

UPMC's Government Affairs Team is committed to delivering relevant and timely news on the latest health care trends, medical research, and clinical developments as they relate to public health issues.

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UPMC, 200 Lothrop Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

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