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Connecting School Aged Children with EMS Personnel in an EMS Week/EMSC Day Project

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Abstract

Objective: The primary objective of this project was to send thank you cards to each licensed service in the State of Alabama for EMSC Day.

Methods: Contact was made with the Alabama Association of School Nurses. School children from schools that expressed interest in the project provided completed thank you cards. Completed cards were distributed within the EMS region where they were completed.

Results: The initial objective was to obtain one card for each provider service in the state (n=312). 2695 completed cards were returned.

Conclusion: Our original project not only met, but exceeded its intended goal. This is a simple project that provides a way to improve relations with prehospital providers.

Keywords: Emergency medical services; School children; Community service

Introduction

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week is an annual observance that now occurs during the third week of May. Its roots began in 1974, when President Gerald Ford declared November 3-10 “National Emergency Medical Services Week” [1]. Over time, the American College of Emergency Physician (ACEP) has moved the national observance multiple times, with its present timing in the third week of May. EMS week offers a time to bring together communities and medical professionals to honor the dedication of those that provide day to day lifesaving services of medicines “front-line”. Each year the federal EMS for Children (EMSC) Program partners with ACEP, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) to celebrate EMSC Day. This day is Wednesday of EMS Week.

Various efforts have taken place in different States across the nation to honor EMS Week and EMSC Day. For example, the State of Maryland in 2014 and 2017 held a sick teddy bear evaluation and treatment event. In Texas, crew member nominations for Crew of the Year Award have occurred in conjunction with EMSC Day. One suggestion put forward by the federal EMSC program, through the Family Advocacy Network, was to have the state programs send thank you notes to EMS providers that were written and/or colored by school aged children around the state.

The Alabama EMSC Program wanted to support and improve relations with our EMS personnel during EMS Week. In the past, little has been done to celebrate EMS Week in the State of Alabama, from a statewide level. In 2016, the State of Alabama EMSC program hoped to take this federal idea and put it into practice in our State.

Objective

The primary objective of this project was to send thank you cards to each licensed EMS service in the State of Alabama. This represented a goal of approximately 300 cards.

Methods

In February 2016, utilizing a key stakeholder from the EMSC advisory group, contact was made with the Alabama Association of School Nurses. The EMSC thank you card project was outlined in an email communication from the Alabama EMSC State Partnership Grant Manager. Schools that expressed interest in the project were sent pre-printed thank you cards. Return envelopes were included in the mailing. Through email communication, the Alabama EMSC Program maintained

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contact with the Alabama Association of School Nurses and the school nurses who expressed interest in the project. Thank you cards were distributed and returned over an 8-week period, March 2016 to April 2016.

The state of Alabama is composed of 6 EMS Regions. As packets from the schools were returned to the Office of EMS, the cards were counted and logged based on which region they were obtained from. The EMS region affiliated with each particular school was determined so that thank you cards from schools were sent to the EMS services in that particular region. During EMS week of 2016, packets with thank you cards were sent out to each service. Each packet included the school children completed thank you notes and a thank you from the Office of EMS with the name of the schools that submitted the cards. An event was also held in one region at the Children's Hospital on EMSC Day of that week where thank you cards were personally presented to providers as they brought patients into the children's emergency department.

Results

The initial objective was to obtain one card for each provider service in the state (n=312). After initial contact, 37 school systems representing 48 schools, expressed interest in the project.

Of the original 48 schools that expressed interest in the project, 36 (75%) returned completed cards. 4348 cards were distributed to 48 schools and systems throughout the state. 2695 (62%) completed cards were returned by the Office of EMS. One EMS region had no schools that participated in the project. All completed cards were distributed to EMS agencies, with a total of 8-10 cards sent per service.

Discussion

This projects original intent was to improve relations with local EMS providers. After project completion it was also seen to potentially build the relationships between the schools and community. Strengthening relationships among students, the school and their community are key reasons for practicing community service learning [2]. In 2012-2013 it was reported that there were 1,637 public schools in the State of Alabama [3]. We only had participation from a small number of these schools, n=36. Even with this limited school involvement our original project not only met, but exceeded its intended goal. Our response was 8 times greater than our original objective. Utilizing lessons learned from this project and employing this effort on a larger scale, this community service project could feasibly provide one thank you card per provider in our State (n = 12,000).

Conclusion

The response to this project was overwhelming. This is a simple project that provides a way to improve relations with prehospital providers.

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