



The State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services (“EMFTS Board”) issues the following statement:

Regarding the Role of Quality Assurance/Continuous Performance Improvement Process
and Anonymous and Confidential EMS Error Reporting
April 2020

This statement is an attempt to provide general information about the above issue facing EMS providers. It should not be treated as legal advice or medical direction. For direct advice regarding a particular scenario, please consult with your medical director and legal counsel. Although the following statement represents the EMFTS Board’s general position on the above issue, this statement in no way precludes the EMFTS Board from taking disciplinary action in a particular case if necessary. Any potential complaints brought before the EMFTS Board will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Introduction:

The State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services and the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Medical Services acknowledges and supports the value and role of quality assurance and continuous performance improvement processes as an important element in all of the roles and responsibilities encompassed by the practice of EMS medicine. This includes, but is not limited to, patient care, EMS provider safety, staffing, and resilience, vehicle operations, scene management, and partnerships with other first responder, public safety, healthcare, and community sectors.

Discussion:

Quality assurance is defined as the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production. Continuous performance improvement is defined as the ongoing improvement of products, services or processes through incremental and breakthrough improvements. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once.

The value of quality assurance and continuous performance improvement programs has been demonstrated within industrial corporations for many years and is now uniformly recognized and endorsed by national EMS organizations. As a result, national programs, such as the EMS Voluntary Event Notification Tool (E.V.E.N.T) and the Firefighter Near Miss System, have been created to provide avenues of anonymous reporting of near misses, errors, and other incidents.

Medical directors of Ohio EMS agencies are required to conduct performance improvement programs for the EMS providers and agencies they oversee. Ohio trauma legislation requires each emergency medical service organization in this state to implement ongoing peer review and quality assurance programs designed to improve the availability and quality of the emergency medical services it provides.

Effective quality assurance and continuous performance improvement programs have a foundation of confidentiality that supports anonymous reporting of errors, incidents, and deficiencies without fear or risk of retribution, open dialogue during review of reports and data, and the development of constructive measures that will improve patient care and the EMS system.

Conclusion:

Quality assurance and continuous performance improvement are essential components for all Ohio EMS organizations as they serve a critical role in the practice of EMS medicine. Every member of the EMS system

should have access to a channel for anonymous reporting to local, regional, and national quality assurance and continuous improvement programs. To maintain the sanctity of confidentiality and the disclosure protections provided by law, quality assurance or continuous performance improvement documents or reports, unlike other verbal or written forms of documentation, should never be primarily utilized or submitted to the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS for the initiation of an investigation or disciplinary process. The State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire, and Transportation Services is committed to the provision of quality emergency medical services to the residents and visitors of Ohio. This mission includes the support of quality assurance and continuous performance improvement programs for all facets of EMS medicine and the analysis of the generated de-identified data with the goal of enhancing EMS systems and patient care.