Proposed Establishment of Health and Human Services Oversight Subcommittee on Emergency Management Services
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Introduction

Pursuant to RSA 126-A:15, III, the Health and Human Services Oversight Committee has jurisdiction to establish subcommittees as follows:

> II. The oversight committee shall create subcommittees, councils, task forces, or other ancillary bodies as necessary to implement its responsibilities. In developing these bodies, the committee shall take into account major program areas of the department and populations served by the department, such as public health, behavioral health, developmental disabilities, and elderly and adult services. The authorization for each such body shall be repealed on December 31 of the even-numbered year of the biennium. The committee shall:
> (a) Establish specific guidelines or outcomes for each such body, including reporting requirements.
> (b) Appoint members to each such body, including at least one legislator and, as appropriate, other members as determined by the expertise necessary to accomplish the work of the body. Legislative members need not be a member of the oversight committee.
> (c) Appoint a chair of each such body, who shall be a legislator and who shall act as the liaison between the body and the oversight committee.

Discussion

The establishment of a subcommittee on emergency management services is necessary to facilitate a conversation with key stakeholders from both the public and private sector to examine and review gaps in liability coverage and workers compensation for volunteers, such as medical doctors and other clinical staff, who participate in response efforts in times of disasters or public health events. This gap in coverage also applies to volunteers when participating in training and other readiness exercises.

The duration of the work to be accomplished by the proposed subcommittee is anticipated to be approximately 6-8 months (with an organizational meeting scheduled for October or November of this year followed by an estimated 6 regular meetings). The proposed subcommittee will review current statutes and regulations to determine where the gaps in coverage may exist. The subcommittee would report to the Oversight Committee on or before September 1, 2020 with its findings and any recommendations for future legislation to address the issue.

Resources to the subcommittee may include certain state agencies including, but not limited to, the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Safety, Department of Labor and the Department of Justice. Additionally, health care providers and the volunteer community are expected to be fully engaged in working with the proposed subcommittee on this important issue (see attachment).

Conclusion

Based upon the justification discussion set forth above, the Oversight Committee is respectfully being requested to approve the establishment of a subcommittee on emergency management services. Please note that the prior Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on the Emergency Management System was sunsetted with the enactment of HB 1254, Chapter 294 Laws of 2018.

Major Volunteer Units in the State of New Hampshire

Emergency System for the Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professional (ESAR-VHP)

ESAR-VHP is a federal program created to support states and territories in establishing standardized volunteer registration programs for disasters and public health and medical emergencies. It is federally required that each state have an ESAR-VHP registry administered at the state level and this also fulfils a Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant requirement. This registry allows volunteers identities, licenses, credentials, accreditations, and hospital privileges to all be verified in advance reducing the number of spontaneous volunteers saving time and valuable assets in emergency situations.

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

The MRC is a national network of volunteers, organized locally to improve the health and safety of their communities. The State of NH has 13 MRC units with over 860 registered volunteers. These volunteers are vital to the States ability to fulfil Point of Dispensing (POD), sheltering, and community preparedness requirements and demands.

Metropolitan Medical Reserve Corps (MMRS)

MMRS is a statewide response unit developed and funded by the US Department of Homeland Security in order to strengthen each states ability to respond to mass casualty incidents. This team increases the State emergency management and emergency medical response capability and is designed to be versatile and able to respond to a variety of scenarios effectively. The team consists of licensed paramedics, EMTs, firefighters, and medical personnel. This team's equipment, training costs, and two paid positions are funded by a federal grant.

Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT)

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has developed an organized team of mental health and other helping professionals who respond to the behavioral health needs of New Hampshire residents and responders following disasters (e.g., bio-terrorism, man-made or natural disasters). The Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) is comprised of five regions that can be deployed rapidly anywhere in the state. NH DBHRT may be called to respond to disasters or critical incidents when local behavioral health resources have been depleted or are overwhelmed. The goal of the NH DBHRT is to provide an organized response to individuals, families, communities, or responders affected by critical incidents or disasters.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations. There are now CERT programs in all 50 states and their support enables small states such as our own to meet the demands of our communities during large scale emergencies that exhaust our professional response personnel workforce.

New Hampshire Disaster Animal Response Team (NHDART)

In response to the federal Pets Evacuation & Transportation Standards Act, the New Hampshire Disaster Animal Response Team (NHDART) was formed in June, 2007 and in 2011, became a committee of Volunteer NH. Since reorganizing in 2011, NHDART has focused on training existing disaster response teams in Emergency Animal Sheltering operations, developing stand-alone teams, and working with local and state officials to adopt shelter plans that include domestic pets. During the December, 2008 New Hampshire ice storm as many as 19 municipal shelters provided for companion animals during icy temperatures and power outages. Today, NHDART works with the State, municipalities, animal organizations and volunteer groups to help prepare for and provide animal disaster services.