

**Emergency Ground Ambulance Services  
for the County of Kauai**

**Request For Information  
RFI No. HTH-730-1-24**

**Department of Health  
Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention System Branch**

**December 1, 2023**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB) is seeking to procure emergency ground ambulance services for the County of Kauai.

Responsibilities of the service provider include, but are not limited to:

- Providing all advanced life support (ALS) 911 emergency ground ambulance response for the county 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.
- Supplying and maintaining all EMS vehicles, facilities, and medical equipment and supplies that are necessary for providing emergency medical response 24/7/365.
- Management of personnel and all operations which includes education and training to maintain the highest level of competency of personnel, an active quality improvement/quality assurance program to ensure best patient outcomes, performance improvement to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of overall operations (responsiveness, cost containment, safety, etc.), in addition to the provision of day-to-day emergency ground ambulance transport services.
- Coordinating services with other emergency medical services providers, public safety agencies and other resources in the community.
- Accurate and timely reporting of patient, performance, and fiscal data to promote transparency.

The purpose of this Request for Information (RFI) is to obtain community input regarding current level of services, to identify any unmet needs, to provide information about the minimum expectations for potential service providers, and to solicit feedback from potential providers on how current services and operations could be improved.

The information gathered from the RFI will be considered in the development of the Request for Proposals (RFP) which is anticipated to be released no later than the second quarter of 2024. Please be advised that the DOH reserves the right to incorporate or not incorporate any suggestions or recommendations from this RFI in any solicitation.

Please note that pursuant to HAR §3-142-202(c), participation in the RFI process is optional, and it is not required to respond to any subsequent DOH procurement. Neither the purchasing agency nor interested parties responding have any obligation under the RFI.

This RFI is structured in three parts.

- Section I. *Introduction* includes general information and response instructions.
- Section II. *Background* provides background information on the service area and its EMS system.
- Section III. *Questions regarding EMS ground ambulance transport services* contains questions related to EMS services and operations.

## A. Timeline

Respondents have until Friday, December 15, 2023, to reply to this RFI. The DOH anticipates posting the public notice for the RFP no later than the second quarter of 2024. This timeline may be adjusted. The RFP will have a detailed breakdown of dates.

The DOH will conduct a public RFI meeting to obtain community input while developing an RFP. This meeting will be held as follows:

Date: December 11, 2023 Time: 10:00AM HST

Location: Kauai Department of Health Conference Room 3040 Umi Street, Lihue, HI 96766

The option to join the meeting remotely is available via video conference.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81337964248>

Meeting ID: 813 3796 4248

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,81337964248# US (Houston)

+16694449171,,81337964248# US

Dial by your location

- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 444 9171 US
- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
- +1 719 359 4580 US
- +1 253 205 0468 US
- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
- +1 646 931 3860 US
- +1 689 278 1000 US
- +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)
- +1 305 224 1968 US
- +1 309 205 3325 US
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 360 209 5623 US
- +1 386 347 5053 US
- +1 507 473 4847 US
- +1 564 217 2000 US
- +1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 813 3796 4248

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/kxa1mELMK>

**Note: THIS MEETING WILL BE RECORDED**

If an auxiliary aid/service or other accommodation is needed due to a disability, contact the EMSIPSB Mr. Robert Lau via phone at (808)202-2088 or via email at [rlau@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:rlau@doh.hawaii.gov) as soon possible. Requests made as early as possible have a greater likelihood of being fulfilled. Upon request, this notice is available in alternate formats.

### **B. Instructions for Response**

RFI responses must include name, title, organization (if applicable), and contact information of the person and/or organization submitting the response.

Responses to the RFI are due by December 15, 2023, 4:00 P.M. HST. Responses shall indicate “RFI No. HTH-730-1-24. Emergency Ground Ambulance Services for the County of Kauai”. Please email in portable document format (PDF) or hand deliver responses.

Email	Hand Delivery
Mr. Robert Lau <a href="mailto:rlau@doh.hawaii.gov">rlau@doh.hawaii.gov</a>	Mr. Robert Lau 3650 Maunalei Avenue Honolulu, Hawaii 96816

If accommodation is needed to respond to the RFI due to a disability, contact the EMSIPSB Mr. Robert Lau via phone at (808)202-2088 or via email at [rlau@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:rlau@doh.hawaii.gov) as soon possible. Requests made as early as possible have a greater likelihood of being fulfilled.

### **C. Authorization and Definitions**

Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) **§321-1 General powers and duties of the department.**

(a) The department of health shall have general charge, oversight, and care of the health and lives of the people of the State, and shall pursue as a goal, the achievement of health equity. The department shall consider social determinants of health in the assessment of state needs for health.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0001.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0001.htm)

**§321-221 Findings and purpose.** The legislature finds that the establishment of a state emergency medical services system, including emergency medical services for children, is a matter of compelling state interest and necessary to protect and preserve public health. A system designed to reduce medical emergency deaths, injuries, and permanent long-term disability through the implementation of a fully integrated, cohesive network of components, the legislature further finds, will best serve public health needs. Accordingly, the purpose of this part is to establish and maintain a state emergency medical services system in communities that can be most effectively served by the State, and to fix the responsibility for the administration of this state system, which shall provide for the arrangement of personnel, facilities, and equipment for the effective and coordinated delivery of health care services under emergency conditions, whether occurring as the result of a patient's condition, from natural disasters, or from other causes. The system shall provide for personnel, personnel training, communications, emergency

transportation, facilities, coordination with emergency medical and critical care services, coordination and use of available public safety agencies, promotion of consumer participation, accessibility to care, mandatory standard medical recordkeeping, consumer information and education, independent review and evaluation, disaster linkage, mutual aid agreements, and other components necessary to meet the purposes of this part.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0221.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0221.htm)

### **§321-222 Definitions**

"Advanced life support" means initiating all basic life support care as well as invasive patient care designed to stabilize and support a patient's condition due to sudden illness or injury. The care rendered, excluding basic life support, constitutes the practice of medicine.

"Department" means the department of health.

"State system" means the state pre-hospital emergency medical services system.

"Statewide" means all counties in the State.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0222.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0222.htm)

### **§321-223 State emergency medical services system, establishment.**

The department shall establish, administer, and maintain the state emergency medical services system to serve the emergency health needs of the people in the service area.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0223.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0223.htm)

**§321-224 Department of health, functions, duties.** (a) In addition to other functions and duties assigned under this part, the department shall:

- (1) Regulate ambulances and ambulance services statewide;

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0224.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0224.htm)

### **§321-228 Emergency medical services; counties.**

The department shall operate emergency medical ambulance services or contract with a private agency in those counties within the service area that do not apply to it under this section. Any county or private agency contracting to provide emergency medical ambulance services under this section shall be required by the department to implement those services in a manner and at a level consistent with the levels determined under this section.

[https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06\\_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS\\_0321-0228.htm](https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/hrscurrent/Vol06_Ch0321-0344/HRS0321/HRS_0321-0228.htm)

### **§321-229 Emergency medical services personnel, training programs.**

(a) The University of Hawaii shall provide training courses in basic, intermediate, and advanced life support for emergency medical services personnel statewide. The curricula and syllabi of

these courses shall be approved in advance by the department. The curricula and syllabi of courses for ambulance personnel shall be consistent with the scope and level of the practice of emergency medical services associated with emergency ambulance personnel licensure defined by the Hawaii medical board under part II of chapter 453.

(b) The University of Hawaii, or other accredited community college, college, or university, or any professional organization that is approved by the department to provide emergency medical services training, shall consult with the department and any county operating a county emergency medical services system pursuant to part XI of chapter 46 to determine the number and type of emergency medical services courses necessary to support the staffing requirements for emergency medical services. The basic life support and advanced life support training programs shall be relevant to and consistent with the training course required for licensure under chapter 453.

(c) The department shall develop standards for emergency medical services course instructors and standards for emergency medical services training facilities for all basic life support personnel, advanced life support personnel, users of the automatic external defibrillator, and emergency medical dispatch personnel that shall be at least equivalent to or exceed the standards necessary to meet the requirements, pursuant to part II of chapter 453, for the licensure of basic life support personnel and advanced life support personnel.

(d) The department of health may conduct annual inspections of the training facilities and evaluate the qualifications of course instructors to ensure that the standards and qualifications are consistent with the medical standards for basic life support personnel, advanced life support personnel, users of the automatic external defibrillators, and emergency medical dispatch personnel.

## **II. BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR REQUESTED INFORMATION**

### **A. Background**

The neighbor island 911 EMS response system (Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui) is supported in its entirety by the state with contract providers in each county. The state bills and collects for these 911 services. For the County of Hawaii, the fire department provides emergency ground ambulance services. The County of Maui and County of Kauai have both decided to let the Department of Health contract for their emergency ground ambulance services. The City and County of Honolulu operates and maintains its own service area. All counties are subject to DOH regulation including state Standing Orders and quality assurance programs.

The DOH is seeking the highest quality, most reliable emergency ALS ground ambulance services at a reasonable cost. This service shall meet or exceed the quality of service currently provided to the county. The County of Kauai's current EMS ground ambulance model has six (6) ambulance units. There are three (3) hospitals in the County of Kauai designated by the DOH as emergency patient receiving facilities: Wilcox Medical Center, Samuel Mahelona Memorial Hospital, and Kauai Veterans Memorial Hospital. Wilcox Medical Center is located in the town of Lihue and the only Level III trauma center for the county. Patients who require a higher level of care will need to utilize air transport to the island of Oahu through a private carrier.

The estimated funding amount for such services is approximately nine million dollars per fiscal year. The service provider shall be responsible for the management and operation of all emergency ground ambulance services throughout the County of Kauai. These services will include, but are not limited to, staffing of each ambulance at the ALS level, and supplying and maintaining all vehicles, facilities, medical equipment, and supplies that are necessary for providing emergency medical response 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.

## **B. Target Population and Geographic Coverage of Service**

The County of Kauai Emergency Medical Services System services a de-facto population of 89,288 people (2021). The communities are primarily rural with Lihue serving as the County's business and county government center. By the year 2025, it is estimated that the total de-facto population will be approximately 103,800 people. In 2021, the median age was 41 years old and almost 16,000 (21.5%) individuals were 65 years or older.

## **C. Challenges**

- Hawaii's unique geography poses some challenges to its EMS system as it limits timely access to health care, especially in remote rural areas of the neighbor islands. Some rural areas are challenging to access and may lack visible markers identifying the destination. This issue is aggravated by multiple factors such as weather, road conditions, and time of day.
- Isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean in tropical climates, Hawaii is susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis and cannot rely on immediate aid from adjacent states or counties.
- With its tropical climate, Hawaii is a popular travel destination. Outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, swimming, surfing, and snorkeling are enjoyed by residents and visitors all year round and lead to many incidents involving 911 response. Drowning is the 5th leading cause of fatal injuries in Hawaii, with an average of nearly 40 deaths a year. Drowning is the only injury cause for which non-residents comprise a majority of victims (53%), and their inclusion increases the average annual number of deaths to 83.
- The EMS team is required to respond to calls involving residents and visitors living in or occupying single family dwellings, gated communities, condominiums, office buildings, and/or transient accommodations (hotel resorts).
- Kauai County has more than triple the national average of people per population size who are homeless.
- Significant workforce shortages exist in the EMS field for multiple reasons including but not limited to the stressful nature of this occupation, high cost of living, limited training opportunities, an aging workforce, and limited potential for career advancement.

## **D. Priorities**

- Responding to emergency calls for service in a timely manner which minimizes morbidity and mortality, especially for patients with critical healthcare needs.
- Providing essential emergency medical services for all Kauai County residents and visitors, regardless of economic status.
- Providing consistent and reliable emergency medical services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and 365 days per year.
- Encouraging continuous improvement of provider performance and of positive medical outcomes.
- Ensuring fiscal accountability of State resources.

## **III. Questions regarding EMS ground ambulance transport services**

The DOH is pursuing a competitive RFP to provide emergency ALS ground ambulance services for the County of Kauai. Please provide responses to the following questions based on how the state should provide the requested services to this community.

### Services

1. Detail recommendations regarding appropriate staffing, equipment and supplies, infrastructure, or organizational recommendations to meet the demand for service. Consider peak periods and unexpected periods of high call volume.
2. Describe quality measures that should be required of the service provider to ensure the best patient outcomes.
3. What strategies could be employed to improve response times to the more remote rural communities?
4. Describe any perceived disparities in services or response times based on geographic, ethnic, or socioeconomic status?
5. Provide recommendations for maintenance, repair, and replacement schedules for all equipment and vehicles.
6. What are some concerns about ambulance services that need to be addressed? What should be required of Kauai's ambulance service provider?

### Medical Equipment and Technological Improvements

1. Provide recommendations for technological improvements that would help communications and service delivery such as, but not limited to, ability to communicate with other emergency response agencies, response times, ability to track and report data to assess performance and assist in developing performance improvement plans.

2. Provide recommendations for medical equipment and technological improvements that could enhance care and result in better patient outcomes.
3. What are some concerns about communications that need to be addressed? What should be required of Kauai's ambulance service provider?

#### Workforce, Education, and Training

1. There is a paramedic shortage in the State of Hawaii. Increasing education resources in the state would advance workforce development. How could the current paramedic training and education system improve, and what role should the emergency ground ambulance service provider have? Please reference models from other jurisdictions as applicable.
2. What recommendations would help ensure provider staff have the support needed to address occupational stressors and personal mental health?
3. What are ideal shift schedules for EMS personnel? Consider factors such as, but not limited to, work performance, patient safety, health and well-being of EMS personnel, call volume, population, and personnel cost.
4. What are some concerns about workforce and/or education that need to be addressed?

#### Financial

1. What ambulance billing model best suits Kauai County? Provide pros and cons for using a cost reimbursement model versus using a unit cost per hour model.
2. Provide any other financial concerns regarding contracting of an emergency ground ambulance transport service?

#### Other

1. Please provide the DOH with any other suggestions or recommendations that may assist the DOH in developing an RFP.

#### **Confidential Information**

If respondents believe that portions of their RFI response should remain confidential, respondents shall clearly identify the portion of their response they wish to maintain as confidential and include a statement detailing the reasons that the information should not be disclosed.

### **Cost of Response**

DOH will not reimburse any respondent for the cost of preparing and submitting a response to this RFI.

### **Use of Information**

The DOH reserves the right to incorporate information from an RFI response in a subsequent solicitation, if issued, for such a contract. The RFI process is optional and is not required to respond to any subsequent procurement by the DOH. Neither the DOH nor the responding party has any obligation under this RFI.

If there are any questions or clarifications to this RFI, please contact Mr. Robert Lau at [rlau@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:rlau@doh.hawaii.gov) or 808-202-2088.