



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2021.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: County of Henrico  
Program Title: Communications RN Model  
Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Brandon Hinton  
Title: Deputy County Manager for Administration  
Signature: 

## **Program Overview**

In an innovative format, the Henrico County Division of Fire deployed an exciting new model of triaging patient acuity utilizing Henrico County Public School nurses in conjunction with Paramedic Fire Officers to match risk with response during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Division of Fire partnered with HCPS nurses and paired them with firefighters to ask enhanced questions to efficiently meet the needs of the community while balancing risk to firefighters, risk to the community, and maintaining critical personal protective equipment caches in stock.

## **Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality**

The COVID-19 Pandemic presented unique challenges, not previously encountered by the Division of Fire. While the division has responded to many challenges throughout its history, the challenges with COVID-19 were swift and many. Consideration had to be given to dwindling personal protective equipment streams, a potentially sick work force, and a surge in patient acuity levels and volume. Emergency Department and ICU staff and supplies were also a concern during the initial stages of the pandemic.

## **How Program Fulfilled Awards Criteria**

This program was an innovative and rapid response to a global pandemic not seen in recent history. Through diligence and perseverance, the program was created within mere weeks of the pandemic. The model was largely successful the pandemic. The model was largely successful, and the Division of Fire received multiple inquiries into its model from surrounding localities trying to replicate it. The program deserves consideration for recognition due to its creativity, rapid and efficient deployment, and its multi-faceted approach to ensuring the highest level of care was provided to the Community while ensuring a healthy work force was protected at a fiscally neutral cost to the community during an economic downturn.

### **How Program Was Carried Out**

Very early on, the Division of Fire partnered with the Henrico County Public Schools system to capitalize on the availability of trained nursing staff that was not currently deployed within the school system. The Henrico County Division of Fire Communications Captain, Patient Health Services Coordinator and COVID-19 program expert were tasked with developing a three-fold approach to ensuring success within the model. The Patient Health Services Coordinator worked diligently with the Operational Medical Director to rapidly and efficiently create a new set of medical protocols to provide the best care to the community while minimizing risk to the responders. By asking more in-depth questions, this model allowed for a scaled response that minimized EMS personnel interactions with those infected, conserved personal protective equipment, and more effectively treated the community without ever reducing the excellent standard of care. The Communications Captain within the Division of Fire was tasked with creating a program that trained nurses from HCPS to work within a Communications Center. This included working a complex phone system, navigating a Computer Aided Dispatch program, and utilizing the newly created COVID-19 triage system. This system dovetailed perfectly into the commercially purchased Emergency Medical Dispatch program the Division of Fire adopted in 2018. Through a combination of Henrico County Communications personnel, Division of Fire Paramedic Fire Officers, and Henrico County Public Schools RNs Henrico County created a unique and innovative response to the COVID-19 pandemic within mere weeks. The Henrico Emergency Communications Section was a wonderful county partner providing workspace, training, communications equipment, and assistance developing the curriculum for the nursing staff. It is important to note that this program was deployed simultaneously with the Henrico County Division of Fire Communications Fire Officer Program (CFO program.) This model embeds a Paramedic Fire Officer within the Communications Center.

### **Financing and Staffing**

This program used human capital and as such there were no significant operating costs. This model re-purposed nursing staff that were currently not deployed into a program where they could be utilized. To be re-created as a permanent program, the associated costs would be the salary components of any assigned staff that were to be placed. The model is completed, and training components and necessary supplies are maintained within permanent stock with the Emergency Communications Center.

### **Program Results**

The program was a unique opportunity for Henrico County Public Schools and the Henrico County Division of Fire to form a new alliance in the medical field. The program allowed additional medical questions to be asked by a licensed RN working directly under a Physicians' License. The successes of the program are numerous and perhaps the most significant are that the Division of Fire was able to maintain critical medical supplies and personal protective equipment, the needs of the community were met, and the Division of Fire was able to protect its workforce during a global pandemic by reducing calls for service for individuals while maintaining our diligence and mission to serve. Additionally, this program established stronger ties between the DOF and HCPS that would lead to a joint effort in COVID-19 vaccine distribution in 2021.

### **Brief Summary**

This program was innovative, exciting, and fiscally neutral. It deployed Henrico County Public Schools nursing staff that was being compensated according to their contract while not working within their assigned school assignments. This program was able to capitalize on the RN staff; allowing them to bring their skill sets to the public while limiting their exposure to the public by allowing them to be a component of an enhanced 911 system without adding any cost or putting

the nurses at any risk. Through this innovative use of existing human and technical resources Henrico County was able to increase the level of service provided to our community by allowing residents to talk directly with nursing staff to allay their fears and concerns. Additionally, by allowing nurses to give specific, medically controlled direction we were able to triage and prioritize calls for ambulances during what was predicted to be high demand at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. And finally, this program allowed for our firefighting staff to safely engage with the public not simply through the use of proper protective equipment but by having the patient or their family work with a medical professional prior to the fire department's arrival.

**Communications RN Model  
Supplemental Material**

