

Developing a Network of EMS for Children Family Advocates Across Texas

No one has more at stake in the assurance of high-quality pediatric emergency medical care than the parents and family members of children whose lives, at any given time, may be placed into the hands of their local emergency medical service provider. While no parent wants to believe that tragedy will strike their child, all parents have the right to expect that, if the unthinkable ever does happen, their child will be provided with the best possible care from prehospital professionals who are highly trained in pediatric emergency management, have the right tools and equipment, are guided by appropriate pediatric protocols and have access to physician consultation when needed. Parents should also be confident that their child will be transported to a hospital capable of providing the appropriate level of pediatric care.

In order to provide families with the opportunity to be a part of the EMS for Children effort to assure high-quality pediatric emergency medical care in Texas and to make sure that family issues are adequately represented in the State EMS and Trauma System, the EMS for Children State Partnership is reaching out to family volunteers across the state to form regional family advocacy groups that can be linked together to form a state-wide family advocacy network. Volunteers will be an intricate part of the EMS for Children program, working closely with the EMS for Children Advisory Committee and other stakeholders around the state to help guide the development of EMS for Children programs and advocating for children's issues in local communities, in trauma service regions, and at the state level. Training and resources will be provided and a webpage on the [EMS for Children State Partnership website](#) will be dedicated to the family advocacy network. Volunteers in Texas will also be linked to the [National EMS for Children Family Advisory Network \(FAN\)](#) where they can access and share information with family advocates in 54 states and territories and have the opportunity to get involved at the national level.

Knowledge or experience with the emergency medical services system is not necessary to become a volunteer family advocate. However, EMS for Children family advocates are individuals who are interested in learning about state and local emergency services systems and who are passionate about children's safety and healthcare needs. Some have specific interests in the emergency care of children either due to their own personal experiences or to a related occupation or area of expertise. Others, however, are simply interested in helping to improve the healthcare for children in their communities. Family representatives across the nation include teachers, consultants, homemakers, and students. Diversity is an essential characteristic of any effective state-wide representative network, and people from all backgrounds are encouraged to volunteer.

Family advocates represent the consumer's perspective, and the involvement of local community-based family volunteers in EMS for Children will help to integrate the practice of family-centered care into the emergency medical services system. Family-centered care is the concept of family involvement in all aspects of patient care, characterized by collaboration between the patient, the family, and health care professionals. If you would like more information about how you can become involved as an EMS for Children family advocate, or how to develop an EMS for Children volunteer family advocacy group in your community, please call the EMS for Children Office at 832-824-EMSC (3672), send us an e-mail at Samuel.Vance@bcm.edu, or visit www.bcm.edu/pediatrics/EMSC