



# Siren



Summer 2024

A PUBLICATION OF THE CALIFORNIA AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION



2024



STARS OF LIFE





## **DEBT COLLECTION SERVICES FOR THE AMBULANCE INDUSTRY**

- Competitive rates and no up-front costs
- Free pre-collection letters
- Professional, HIPAA compliant collectors
- Interactive client web portal

**800-564-6400**

**[www.PacificCreditServices.com](http://www.PacificCreditServices.com)**

### CAA Vision

To champion the leadership, advocacy, education, and tools that empower California’s private ambulance and mobile healthcare services to provide people-centered EMS systems and standards. The CAAs overarching role is to provide support for those who care for their communities.

### CAA Mission

Be a recognized voice, advocate, and authority of best practices for ambulance providers throughout California.

### CAA Leadership

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- President:** Jaison Chand
- Vice-President:** Steve Grau
- Secretary/Treasurer:** Melissa Harris
- Immediate Past President:** James Pierson
- Directors:** Brian Henricksen  
Carly Strong  
Sean Sullivan  
Todd Valeri
- Sergeant-at-Arms:** Josette Engman

#### STAFF

- Executive Director:**  
Rob Lawrence – [rlawrence@the-caa.org](mailto:rlawrence@the-caa.org)
- Administrative Director:**  
Kim Oreno – [koreno@the-caa.org](mailto:koreno@the-caa.org)
- Accountant:**  
Tricia Schrum, CPA – [tricia@camgmt.com](mailto:tricia@camgmt.com)
- Meeting Planner:**  
Jennifer Blevins – [jennifer@camgmt.com](mailto:jennifer@camgmt.com)

## Table of Contents

<b>President’s Message</b>	2
— Jaison Chand	
<b>Executive Director’s Report</b>	3
— Rob Lawrence	
<b>A Healthy Degree of You, and Me, and EMSers</b>	5
— Danielle Thomas	
<b>Reporter David Nazar Wins Two Golden Mike Awards for His Coverage of MediCal Healthcare Reimbursement</b>	7
— Rob Lawrence	
<b>American Ambulance Association’s Vanguard Award Winner 2024: Lavonne C. Hall</b>	9
<b>Photos from the 2024 Stars of Life</b>	10
<b>CARLY’S CORNER:</b>	
<b>Loss &amp; Leadership in the County of Mercy</b>	11
— Carly Strong	
<b>LEGISLATIVE UPDATE</b>	14
— Dorian Almaraz	
<b>PAYER ISSUES:</b>	
<b>Clearinghouse Ransomware Impacts Ambulance Providers</b>	16
— Dorian Almaraz	
<b>OPERATIONS UPDATE</b>	17
— Max Laufer & Brian Meader	

### Editorial Information

The views and opinions in the articles herein are not to be taken as official expressions of the publishers unless so stated. The publishers do not warrant, either expressly or by implication, the factual accuracy of the articles herein, nor do they so warrant any views or opinions offered by the authors of said articles. Manuscripts and queries should be directed to Editor, the *Siren* at the address listed below, left.

© Copyright 2024 California Ambulance Association. No material can be reproduced without the express written consent of the publisher.

Circulation among California’s private ambulance providers, elected officials and EMSA administrators.



# President's Message

**Jaison Chand**  
**President**  
**California Ambulance Association**

It is a pleasure to write the Presidents foreword in the *Siren*. I take pride in recognizing all the hard work of our membership. The commitment and work product of our volunteer board members, committee chairs, members and meeting attendees has been humbling. The gift of time to further the collective momentum of ambulance services in California is something that similar associations could only hope for.

I'd like to start by thanking all involved with bringing their Stars to Sacramento to celebrate their achievements. It was an honor to meet and congratulate all our



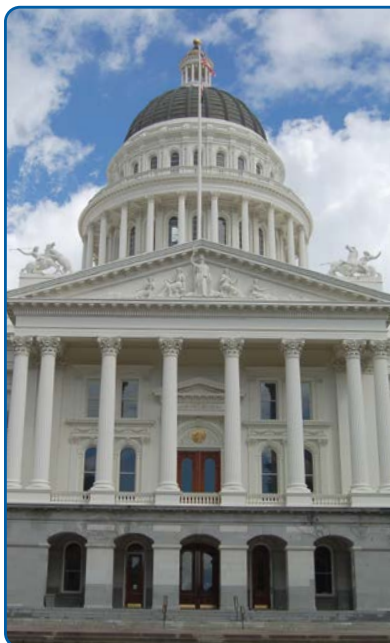
Stars of Life and read their remarkable back stories; all tales of service to our patients and as well as their own co-workers. The ability to then follow them into the state Capitol to witness them receiving worthy

recognition from their own elected officials was nice to see.

We continue to work hard on the legislative front in terms of bills for consideration in the 2024 round and also ensuring that CAA sponsored and supported bills from last year are executed as they were intended. Currently **AB-2859 Emergency medical technicians: peer support** continues to progress, and work on the implementation of last year's **AB 716, Balanced Billing Legislation** in terms of its management and reporting requirements continue.

As we head into the next quarter of the year we look forward to joining our LEMSA colleagues at the 2024 EMS Administrators Association of California (EMSAAC) meeting in Coronado and putting the final touches to planning our own conference in Anaheim. \*

**Jaison Chand**



## CAA Membership is a Business Essential

The business environment, the healthcare sector and the EMS industry are evolving at an ever-increasing pace. At the CAA we are dedicated to providing members with the essential tools, information, resources, and solutions to help your organization grow and prosper. And, the CAA's collective efforts on statewide legislative and regulatory issues are not possible without strong membership support and engagement.

### Take your place in California's statewide ambulance leadership

Membership not only saves you money on CAA events and resources, but also keeps you up to date on trends, innovations, and regulatory changes through:

- Leadership on statewide legislative and regulatory issues
- Targeted conferences & educational programs
- Member-only updates and alerts
- Member-only discounts & access to expert resources
- Opportunities to exchange ideas with your colleagues statewide



**Join the California Ambulance Association**

Go to [www.the-caa.org/join-the-caa](http://www.the-caa.org/join-the-caa) for a membership application.





# Executive Director's Report

**Rob Lawrence**  
**Executive Director**  
**California Ambulance Association**

**W**elcome to this edition of the *Siren*. To say that we haven't had time to pause for breath in the last quarter would be an understatement. Our committees and specific task groups have been in overdrive, looking out for the interests of the association.

As we all know, the Balance Billing legislation has been signed into law. It was a treat to go into the state Capitol during Stars of Life Celebration and seek out the actual author of the bill in Asm Boerner's office, and both thank and discuss the bill. We also had the chance to discuss the bill and its patient protections with other states going through their own Balance Billing legislative process. I'm confident language drafted in Sacramento has already found its way across the country. But as many know, for us, the hard work has begun as we educate and inform members, payers, administrators, and politicians on the delivery requirements of the bill. Kudos go to our Medicare consultant, Doug Wolfberg, for his wise counsel, and also to colleagues from the Emergency Medical Services Administrators Association of California (EMSAAC) who joined us in a specially recorded webinar, openly available at <https://youtu.be/HBJ-wUxlcM4>, highlighting the AB716 requirements, particularly those laid upon our LEMSA and EMSA regulators.

The main events of the quarter undoubtedly rest with our ability to celebrate our amazing teams at the CAA Stars of Life.

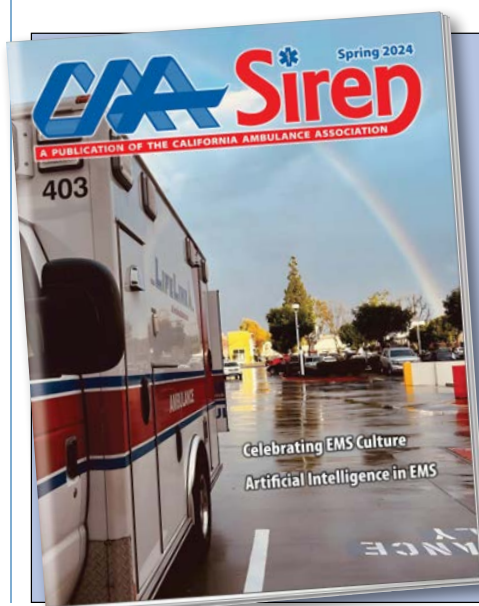
Once again, we were able to welcome over 90 amazing Stars of all disciplines: EMTs, Medics, Nurses, Pilots, Administrators, and those who support us. They all take part in supporting our primary mission of providing outstanding patient care. We are delighted to present a photo montage of the event in this edition.

A number of CAA leaders also recently attended the 2024 American Ambulance Association annual convention where they networked, educated, and learned. While in Nashville, we were also excited to see Mrs. Lavonne Hall (Hall Ambulance) receive her AAA Vanguard Award, presented to women leaders of our industry who have provided in excess of 35 years of service.

She joins Helen Pierson, Carol Meyer, Cindy Elbert, and Janet Smith as CAA vanguard members – congratulations, Mrs. Hall.

Looking forward, we are all excited to fly the CAA flag at the upcoming EMSAAC conference. We are a proud sponsor of this event and also look forward to interacting with our administrators, discussing key areas of mutual interest.

In closing, it's time to ask you to block your calendar out during the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> of September to attend the 2024 CAA Annual Conference in Anaheim. Steve Grau, Danielle Thomas, and team are working hard as I write to put a stellar program together. 🌟



## Subscribe to the *Siren*

**The official magazine of the California Ambulance Association**

CAA members receive the *Siren* as a member benefit.

1 year: \$90\* 2 years: \$150\*  
Call (877) 276-1410 to subscribe.

\*California residents, add 8.5% sales tax

The California Ambulance Association is now welcoming non-members to subscribe to the *Siren* magazine. Published quarterly, the *Siren* is a comprehensive source of information on issues that are important to the ambulance industry. Contents include feature articles, association educational and networking events, legislative updates and analysis, member news and much more.







# A Healthy Degree of You, and Me, and EMSers



**Danielle Thomas**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**LifeLine EMS**

**N**o matter which social media platform you navigate these days, you'll inevitably find yourself diving into a sea of AI assistants, enticed to purchase the latest gadget, or sharing your newfound favorite inspirational quote with your BFF at 2 am. I often capture snapshots of this digital landscape, pondering its relevance later, thinking, "This deeply resonates with me." For a brief span of three minutes, I'm infused with fresh goals and newfound directions, even a different approach to leadership.

In the realm of inspirational content on social media, there's a myriad of perspectives competing for attention, making it increasingly challenging to guide and engage our workforce. Josh Howarth, referencing a GWI statistic, highlights that out of the 68.6 million Gen Z individuals in the United States, 64% use Instagram daily, with 40% indicating plans to leave their jobs within the next two years. Gen Zs are on social media an average of two hours and 43 minutes each day. It's clear that Gen Z is significantly influenced by daily online interactions, potentially leading to short-term commitments.

The dichotomy between "You do You" and "Be Kind to Others" poses a dilemma. Are they mutually exclusive, and does one attitude overshadow the other, complicating workplace dynamics? Absolutely!

Fundamentally, our leaders and workforce are inclined towards kindness, advocating for the "Be Kind to Others" ethos. The services they provide and the communities they support rely on this inherent goodness, even during the darkest hours. But do we truly

*continued on page 6*

grasp how social media norms shape the behavior and mindset of current and future employees? Could someone's online interests, which shape social media algorithms, predefine their suitability as a valuable team member?

In numerous fields, including EMS, organizations leverage social media to depict a day in the life of professionals like EMTs, showcasing their profession. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube serve as prime hubs for individuals exploring various career paths. Yet, when our thoughts and actions are molded or at least influenced by online content, leaders in EMS organizations face mounting challenges. Does indulging in a day of "Self-Love" prompt more absences from work?

To effectively lead and manage people, we must trust in their dedication, believing they adhere to the path of kindness and commitment. However, the sentiment of "straightening another's crown without broadcasting it to the world" seems to be diminishing by the day.

My latest favorite screenshot features wisdom from Anais Nin, reminding us that, "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are."

Can we guide and inspire our workforce for two hours and forty-three minutes each day? Someone is doing it, and it should ideally be us. ✨



**Life-Assist**  
Helping Heroes Save Lives

**Emergency Medical Supplies**  
FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

- ✓ Free Shipping on orders over \$100
- ✓ Same Day Shipping for Orders Placed by 4PM Local Time
- ✓ Quality Products at Competitive Prices

**Friendly, Knowledgeable Staff**  
When you call Life-Assist during business hours, you will always be greeted by one of our Customer Care Specialists.

**Online Features**  
Manage multiple users, orders, accounts, item supply lists, and more.

800 824 6016 | Life-Assist.com



**We don't see things as they are,  
we see them as we are.**

ANAIS NIN

MINIMALISTQUOTES.COM





# Reporter David Nazar Wins Two Golden Mike Awards for His Coverage of MediCal Healthcare Reimbursement

**Rob Lawrence**  
**Executive Director**  
**California Ambulance Association**

During the 2023 California Legislative Season, CAA campaigned heavily for an increase in the state MediCal rate. Sadly, this was moved to a two-year bill and we still look for our first increase in over 20 years. During the campaign phase, TV investigative journalist David Nazar reported and commented on California EMS issues in his report "California Ambulance Crisis."

We are delighted to report that David was honored by the The Radio & Television News Association of Southern California honored Los Angeles with two Golden Mike Awards (Division B) for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism. Nazar was awarded Best News Public Affairs Program and Best News Reporting at the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Golden Mike Awards Ceremony.



PBS news program "Sustaining US" investigated how the State of California MediCal healthcare reimbursement system has led to some of the lowest and most unfair private ambulance company reimbursement rates in the United States.



RTNA recognized Nazar for his half hour broadcast "California Ambulance Crisis." David Nazar News in collaboration with the



The award-winning field report featured exclusive interviews with ambulance company owners and EMTs who explained how

*continued on page 8*

entry level workers at places like Starbucks and Target make more money than emergency medical technicians who save lives. Nazar investigated how the shockingly low pay rate has private ambulance companies unable to recruit or retain ambulance workers. Nazar also discussed how this State of California bureaucracy is having a ripple effect within the healthcare industry as many companies are now going out of business.

"We journalists must investigate and report the truth about government corruption and bureaucracy that continues to harm the lives of average Americans who are struggling these days to simply earn a paycheck and provide for themselves and their families."

"Sadly, and far too often, the government throughout the State of California has impeded financial progress for so many residents. I hope this special report gives the public an example of how government bureaucracy is really harming the hero EMTs who put their lives on the line each and every day to save people. I am so privileged and honored that RTNA recognized our work with the Golden Mike awards," Nazar said. 🌸

Here is a link to the award-winning episode "California Ambulance Crisis."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDWZVBTYNig&t=6s>



## LegalShield can help keep your employee's personal problems from becoming personnel problems!



### Have your employees ever...

- Received a moving traffic violation? (yes, we work to keep records clear)
- Had a problem with child support or visitation rights?
- Been involved in a divorce or separation?
- Tried to return a defective product?
- Tried to return a defective spouse? 😊
- Been ignored by their landlord?
- Been in a traffic accident?
- Been concerned about identity theft?
- Been worried about being involved in a data breach?

***LegalShield protects your employees as a voluntary employee benefit at NO risk or out-of-pocket cost to your company !***

Because we are a Corporate Business Affiliate with the CAA, a portion of the membership fees from each member that protects themselves or their family ***goes to YOUR CAA as an Ongoing Royalty.***

This also applies to any of your vendor companies or friends that you refer who have companies that offer our benefits.

Schedule a short call or zoom meeting to find out more by going to [www.schedulebill.com](http://www.schedulebill.com)





# AMERICAN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION

REPRESENTING EMS  
IN AMERICA

## American Ambulance Association's Vanguard Award Winner 2024:

### LAVONNE C. HALL

The American Ambulance Association (AAA) has named Lavonne C. Hall, chairman of the board and chief administrative officer of Hall Ambulance, as a recipient of a 2024 Vanguard Award. The distinction honors women with at least 35 years of service who have blazed the trail for fellow female emergency medical services (EMS) professionals.

The presentation occurred in Nashville at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center during the President's Reception at the American Ambulance Association's Annual Conference. "The Vanguard Awards pay tribute to the exceptional women who've torn down walls and laid the groundwork for those who follow," AAA President Randy Strozzyk remarked. "We're honored to recognize and celebrate their contributions."

Mrs Hall is one of 16 women from across the U.S. and the only one from California to be bestowed with the award this year. To be considered for nomination, the individual must have contributed to their organization, state ambulance association, AAA, other professional associations, and/or the EMS profession in an extraordinary way beyond faithful completion of job duties. "I am delighted and thankful to be receiving a Vanguard award," a jubilant Hall remarked. "To be honored alongside women who have done incredible and inspiring work in EMS is humbling and a bit overwhelming. I have been lucky enough to have a career I love



in an industry that still inspires me after 40 years. To be recognized for that career is icing on the cake."

In reflection, Hall explains how she feels fortunate to have started her EMS career at a company that welcomed and valued the contributions of female employees. "I remember my first day at Hall Ambulance Service as a new EMT; I was assigned to ride along on a double paramedic ambulance; both paramedics were women," said Hall. "I was so inspired by their professionalism and confidence. They made sure I felt welcome and needed as a woman in an industry that most positions had been held by men."

Ever since, Hall has drawn from that feeling of inclusion. "Looking back, I realize what a luxury it was not to have to force myself into a space but to be welcomed into it. I have carried that feeling with me and tried to make everyone, but especially women, feel that a space was already carved out for them, and they were welcome in it," Hall explained.

Following her husband's passing, she vowed to become an advocate to raise awareness and funds to support medical research on Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease. She joined the board of the CJD Foundation, created the Harvey L. Hall Memorial Grant, and co-started Strides for CJD – Bakersfield, which has raised over \$451,000 to support medical research and programs for the foundation over the past six years.

Mrs Hall joins fellow CAA members, Helen Pierson, Carol Meyers, Janet Smith and Cindy Elbert as AAA Vanguard Awardees. ✨









## CARLY'S CORNER: Loss & Leadership in the County of Mercy

**Carly Strong**  
**Chief Operating Officer**  
**SEMSA/Riggs Ambulance Service**

**W**hen I look back, I don't remember the first time I encountered death in my EMS career. Sure, I remember running my first code blue and my first declaration of an obvious 1144, but as clinicians, when we run these calls, usually it isn't the death we remember. Typically, the memory is of the way we ran the call, the procedures we did, what went well, and what didn't, and then we go run another call. Maybe even another code or 1144, and if you had more than one of those in your shift, you might even high-five your partner when your shift ends for the hard work you two did that day.

As a medic, I felt prepared to handle this type of loss throughout my career; I understood it was part of the job. My second year as a medic, my relief and former partner didn't show up for her shift. It wasn't like her to be late, so after 30 minutes, we drove to her house thinking maybe she overslept. A few minutes after her partner and I arrived at her house, I declared her an 1144. There wasn't anything I could do. This was the first death that didn't fit in the "what to expect in EMS box" for me. The first one that didn't end when I submitted my PCR and went home. The first one that at 26 years old made me call my dad to come stay with me for a couple of days.

A little over a decade later, my role had changed, and I'm now the leader of the

organization. Early one morning, I received a call from our Employee/PR Manager informing me that one of our employees was killed in a vehicle accident on their way home from work. Clearly, a call you never want to receive. I would receive two more calls like this from her before she left our organization.

In our organization, our Employee/PR manager is the person who, unfortunately, takes the lead when dealing with the death of an employee. She guided me on the part I took in this, and we got to work. This was a new experience for me seeing what occurs on the back end of an employee death. The Leadership team couldn't be consumed with sadness; we had to remain functional and focused. Very similar to our field crews running a code, you follow the process/protocol, finish the call, and go run another one. Less callous, of course, but there was a process for this type of thing. This was difficult but something I could handle.

We set up support for our employees, arranged CISDs, planned meal trains for



**Eva Ybarra**

the family of the deceased, worked with HR for life insurance payouts, ensuring family received the employee's pay, helped the family with funeral arrangements, arranged funeral processions with co-responders, and so on. We recovered from each of these tragic events as a strong team.

We welcomed our new Employee/PR Manager in 2022, Eva Ybarra. Eva was a great addition to our Leadership Team and organization. She brought light and laughter to our organization that we

*continued on page 12*

needed. We were fortunate to work closely with Eva for just over a year. Then last October, I got a call that would have normally come from her, but it was about her. It was just after midnight, and based on the name showing on my phone, I knew this wasn't going to be a good call. Nothing could have prepared me for what I heard:

Eva had been shot. Our dispatch center received the call, our supervisor and ALS crew responded, there was no transport.

That was the loudest thing I had ever heard at midnight. Eva was now one of the casualties of Merced County.

Our whole organization was broken, and the one that would have gotten us through this was the one that was gone. How were we going to keep going? 911 calls were still coming in; we still have employees we need to support, and an EMS system to run, but leadership was broken.

The sun was out, but it was so foggy in our world, like a heavy grey blanket. At this point, not one of us in leadership could fully do our own job, let alone try and figure out how we were going to do Eva's. How were we going to play Eva's role in handling Eva's death? As the COO, I struggled to find the answer to this for my team because I was shattered too. The first part of this process for me would have been to coordinate with her; every time I remembered this, I was reminded she was gone like a slap in the face. With the first step in our process being the piece we were missing, I found myself stuck in place not knowing where to start.

We started like you would a puzzle, placing the pieces right side up and putting them together one at a time. It took everyone, and roles no longer mattered. Clinical figured out how to log in to our social media accounts; I wrote the post about her death, HR kept us fed, the supervisors drove us to deliver food to her family, dispatch set up rooms for all of us to just sit in silently together, our admin staff in another state helped with local tasks. It took a village for us to complete a task that normally took one person a few steps.

The Union was the first of our partners to send flowers and check on us. The card was addressed to "Riggs Leadership," and there was something so significant to me in reading that; I broke down. Leadership was broken this time. Each death we've navigated in the past, leadership was on the supporting end of it; now it had shifted.

The grace I was given as the COO was the only thing that helped me survive this tragedy. The hugs from the SSTs when I showed up in sweats instead of a suit because I just couldn't imagine getting dressed that day, the flowers from the Union that validated our loss and offered support, my leadership team allowing me to be broken and not have any answers. Our titles don't separate us; they just label the role we play within our organization. Give grace as leaders; we will all need it at some point. \*

*The*  
**LEADERSHIP**  
**IN EQUITY AWARD**  
CARESTAR  
FOUNDATION

Celebrating exceptional individuals and teams from CAA member organizations, who have actively championed greater racial equity in EMS, striving to eliminate racial disparities, challenge systemic barriers, and promote cultural humility.

Nominations open in early 2024. More information to come.

**CARESTAR**  
FOUNDATION

[www.carestarfoundation.org](http://www.carestarfoundation.org)



loanDepot<sup>®</sup>  
NMLS#174457



**SPECIAL DISCOUNT**

FOR

**FIRST RESPONDERS**

**POLICE OFFICERS | FIRE FIGHTERS  
EMTs | PARAMEDICS**

**0.5%**  
**LENDER CREDIT\***

**LET'S CONNECT!**

**Michele Kesner**

NMLS #459504

Loan Consultant

mkesner@loanDepot.com

**(916) 202-1495**



1610 R Street, Suite 260, Sacramento, CA, 95811 | loanDepot.com, LLC NMLS ID 174457. Licensed by the Department of Financial Protection and Innovation under the California Residential Mortgage Lending Act CRMLA 4131040. \*Offer valid only on eligible loans with an interest rate locked beginning 11/13/2023 with loanDepot's Retail Channel. loanDepot will provide a credit of up to 0.5 points in closing cost (0.5 point equals 0.5% of the loan amount). Applicant must be employed as a police officer, fire fighter, paramedic or emergency medical technician at time of closing to qualify for the discount. This offer cannot be utilized on the following loan programs: accessZERO and accessONE programs, loans applied indirectly through a third party, brokered loans, home equity lines of credit, bond loans, or consumer loans. Discount offered in the form of a lender credit of up to 0.5% towards closing cost that will be applied at the time of closing as a lender credit. Credit cannot be applied to minimum down payment or loan contribution requirements. Credit will only be applied at closing. Borrower is responsible for appraisal fees, credit report fees, and other settlement services and closing costs incurred. A borrower may not use this offer to obtain a refund for closing costs in the event that a loan fails to close or fund. Some offers cannot be combined with other discounts or promotions. This is not a commitment to lend. Approval is subject to verification of credit, income, assets, and value and other factors. Terms and conditions of this offer are subject to change without notice and are non-transferrable. (042424 134274-5156)

**Just For You!**

Grant Mercantile Agency is proud to diligently serve many CAA members, and we welcome the opportunity to offer your agency the same services!



A Professional  
Debt Collection Agency

grantmercantile.com



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

**Dorian Almaraz**  
**Prime Strategies of California, LLC**

**I**n 2023, the California Ambulance Association (CAA) had its most successful legislative session to date with two sponsored bills signed into law, in addition to other legislative victories. So far in 2024, priorities have largely focused on continuing the fight to increase the Medi-Cal reimbursement rate for non-emergency transports and interfacility transfers.

## 2024 SPONSORED BILL

**AB 2859 (Patterson):** This bill authorizes an emergency medical services (EMS) provider to establish a peer support and crisis referral program to provide a network of peer representatives available to aid fellow employees on emotional or professional issues. AB 2859 also provides that EMS personnel, whether or not a party to an action, have a right to refuse to disclose, and to prevent another from disclosing, a confidential communication between the EMS personnel and a peer support team member, crisis hotline, or crisis referral service, except under limited circumstances, including, if disclosure is reasonably believed to be necessary to prevent death, substantial bodily harm, or commission of a crime, or in a criminal proceeding. *The bill previously passed the Assembly Health Committee on a 16-0 vote and the Assembly Judiciary Committee on a 11-0 vote. It is currently pending consideration from the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*

## 2024 BILL OF INTEREST

**AB 2973 (Hart):** This bill would authorized a county board of supervisors or a local EMS agency to provide or support the provision of EMS to persons located within the county. The bill also would have required a county board of supervisors or a local EMS agency to adopt a written policy setting forth specified requirements for an emergency ambulance services provider in order to enter into a contract with a provider for emergency ambulance services. This bill was opposed by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the ambulance industry. In addition to opposition from the CAA, numerous provider companies submitted letters of opposition. Due to the stiff pushback, the author agreed to shelve the bill for now.

The CAA is also monitoring other legislation related to the industry but has yet to take an official position. As bills move through the legislative process and changes are made, the CAA may decide to take formal positions on additional legislation.

## 2024 PRIORITY ISSUE

The top priority for CAA in 2024 is an increase in the Medi-Cal reimbursement rate for interfacility transfers (IFT), which has not been raised since the 1990s. To raise the issue, the CAA has begun to form a coalition of county officials, labor partners, and other allies to push the idea forward. This coalition met with the Director of the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) in mid-April to bring the issue to their attention. The biggest hurdle in this endeavor is lack of funding at state level. The Legislative Analyst's Office, which is a nonpartisan fiscal and policy advisor to the State Legislature, reported that the Budget deficit was more than \$70B. Despite this, the IFT coalition is continuing to move forward and meet with state leaders to draw down whatever funds possible to increase the rate. ✱





the  
**CODEGREEN**  
campaign

**#anamenotread**

In **THIS FAMILY, NO ONE** fights alone  
and **EVERYONE** goes **HOME...**

[codegreencampaign.org](http://codegreencampaign.org)

**LEADER**



**PROUDLY BUILT IN CALIFORNIA** SINCE 1975

Find out more at [www.leaderambulance.com](http://www.leaderambulance.com)



# PAYER ISSUES: Clearinghouse Ransomware Impacts Ambulance Providers

**Donna Hankins**  
**Co-Chair, CAA Payer Issues Committee**

Clearinghouses serve four main purposes: validate patient insurance, process the medical claim, provide an ERA (electronic remittance advice), and transfer payments to providers. While some clearinghouses have exclusive “rights” for an insurance plan, most clearinghouses partner with each other which allows a provider to use one clearinghouse for most insurances.

Medical billing utilizes electronic services to streamline claims processing. Clearinghouse systems have been in place for years with extensive security measures. Conversely, insurance plans have implemented technology to convert the paper form (1500 claim in ambulance billing) to an electronic file, require electronic claim submission, and provide electronic remittances (ERA) files to help import claim responses. When working, these systems ensure prompt payment for the services provided.

CHANGE Healthcare Clearinghouse is part of Optum Health, a subsidiary of United Healthcare. On Feb 21, 2024, the clearinghouse CHANGE Healthcare (formerly EMDEON) was caught in a ransomware cyber-attack. Hackers were able to break into the database, steal information and demand payment from CHANGE Healthcare. This event affected all levels of medical billing and most



ambulance providers, even those who do not use CHANGE Healthcare. This situation resulted in a shutdown of the clearinghouse for weeks and created three immediate effects:

- \* Providers contracted to use CHANGE Healthcare to validate insurance or submit claims could not perform these tasks.
- \* Other clearinghouses who shared claim data with CHANGE Healthcare could not send or receive files.
- \* Any Insurance Plan who used CHANGE Healthcare to process payment information could not create the electronic file or payment to send to the provider.

Change healthcare claims processing was mostly back online by April; however, the impact of the breach, subsequent shutdown and return to normal continues into the summer. The secondary impact of this breach include a delay in paper claims processing and payments from insurances. For example, paper claims submission spiked during the shutdown creating a “traffic jam” being felt by providers as insurance plans added manual processes and additional labor to process the paper.

As Change Healthcare Clearinghouse recovers, providers can look back at the situation and take a few lessons from this situation moving forward, focusing on security and technology:

- \* Be aware of insurance sites used at your company and make sure staff secure the technology, specifically website passwords and computer security.
- \* Know what clearinghouses are used by your company, what insurance claims they process, and have an emergency “pivot plan” to another clearinghouse or be prepared for paper claim submission and delays.
- \* Monitor insurances for claim receipt and prompt payment (whether sent electronically or on paper) to confirm the impact on your reimbursement. \*





# OPERATIONS UPDATE

**Max Laufer**  
**MaxCare Ambulance**  
**Brian Meader**  
**Medic Ambulance**

**CAA Operations  
Committee Co-Chairs**



**T**he Operations Committee of the California Ambulance Association is led by co-chairs Brian Meader and Max Laufer, comprises of both IFT, and 911 providers dedicated to overseeing and optimizing the operational aspects of all ambulance services in California. Our discussions involve implementing best practices, various day to day challenges, and staying updated on regulations and industry

standards/benchmarks. We collaborate with industry experts, government agencies and emergency responders to ensure and contribute to the overall effectiveness, efficiency, and reliability of the emergency and non-emergency medical services in the state.

We try to leave no stone unturned on our calls, touching on everything from operations,

different legislative bills, supply chain logistics & management and even some human resources topics. Active participation is crucial to our success, making this committee a really great opportunity for individuals from mid-level supervisors to managers to owners, to contribute and learn from our collective experience. Feel free to join us the second Tuesday every month at 10:00 am! \*

**Navigating the Complexities  
of Ambulance Insurance**

- ◆ Professional Liability
- ◆ General Liability
- ◆ Auto Liability
- ◆ Workers Compensation

Cindy Elbert Insurance Services, Inc. was founded in 1982 to offer professional services designed to assist ambulance providers with their unique insurance needs.

We draw from our many years of experience and established relationships with underwriters to provide tailored coverage so you can focus on your job of saving lives!

**CINDY ELBERT  
INSURANCE  
SERVICES**  
[www.AmbulanceInsurance.com](http://www.AmbulanceInsurance.com)

**1-888-681-1020 | [www.ambulanceinsurance.com](http://www.ambulanceinsurance.com) | [info@ambulanceinsurance.com](mailto:info@ambulanceinsurance.com)**



2520 VENTURE OAKS WAY, SUITE 150  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95833 • [www.the-caa.org](http://www.the-caa.org)  
877.276.1410 (toll free) • 916.924.7323 (fax)

FIRST CLASS  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #1620  
SACRAMENTO, CA

**INNOVATING**  
*For You*  
**EVOLVING**  
*With You*

- Patient-Discharge Systems
- Transportation Ordering
- 911 Nurse Navigation
- Behavioral Healthcare
- Natural Disaster Response

Click here to learn more about  
AMR's cutting-edge products  
and services today.

**AMR**  
A Global Medical Response Solution