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## **Subject: Update on Regional Medication Exchange Program Transition**

Dear Esteemed Agencies,

As promised, I am providing you with the latest updates regarding the Regional Medication Exchange Program. Recent developments have significantly impacted our region and the EMS community as a whole across the Commonwealth. I appreciate your attention as this message contains crucial information.

Firstly, I urge you to reach out to me promptly if you encounter any rumors concerning the program, whether within the region or statewide. In the dynamic environment of EMS, misinformation can spread quickly, and not all sources may have the best interests of our system at heart. Please rest assured that the Council is actively gathering verified information to disseminate to all EMS agencies promptly. While we may not have all the answers immediately, we are committed to investigating any questions you may have throughout this process.

For over 46 years, the Lord Fairfax EMS Council has collaborated closely with hospital pharmacies throughout the region to facilitate the EMS Medication Exchange Program. This program has played a vital role in ensuring EMS providers' access to essential medications and delivering high-quality patient care. It stands as a testament to the collaborative efforts of hospital pharmacies, EMS agencies, and regional stakeholders working together for the betterment of patient outcomes.

As communicated in my previous email, stakeholders including the Virginia Regional EMS Councils, the Virginia Office of EMS, Hospital Pharmacists, and agency leaders have been addressing the implications of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Drug Supply Chain Security Act, with regulations taking effect on November 27, 2024. A workgroup was appointed by the VA Regional EMS Councils' Directors Group last year to tackle this complex issue.

In recent weeks, we have faced setbacks with hospital pharmacies outside the region withdrawing from regional medication exchange programs. This trend has led to a broader impact, with corporate administrators instructing hospital pharmacies statewide to discontinue support for EMS medication exchange programs. While we had hoped for Valley Health pharmacies to

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continue our one-for-one exchange program, the withdrawal of support from hospitals across the Commonwealth makes this outcome increasingly unlikely.

**Amidst this transition, I strongly encourage all licensed EMS agencies within the LFEMS region to apply for a Controlled Substance Registration (CSR) at their earliest convenience.**

Resources and guidance to assist you through this process are available on our website (link provided below). Additionally, ALS agencies seeking to continue carrying Schedule II-V medications (e.g., Fentanyl, Midazolam) must obtain a DEA license following CSR acquisition. LFEMS is dedicated to supporting agencies throughout this transition and will offer further assistance and resources in the coming weeks.

Several critical issues remain unresolved, including the disposition of medications owned by Valley Health currently stocked in drug boxes across our region, restocking procedures to minimize unit downtime, and other logistical considerations. Additionally, all 11 Virginia Regional EMS Councils have secured a contract through the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA), enabling agencies to purchase medications and supplies at significantly reduced rates (hospital pharmacy rates). Further details on this contract and medication costs will be provided within the next 30 days. While we acknowledge the challenges this transition presents, we are committed to supporting agencies every step of the way. It is imperative that your agency begins preparations for an agency-based medication program by obtaining necessary certifications and evaluating medication requirements.

In 2017, Congress passed the Patient Access to Medication Act, establishing a mechanism for EMS agencies to obtain and carry Schedule II-V medications. Although the DEA has drafted regulations, they have yet to be published. We anticipate their release in the near future, which may introduce additional constraints and compress our timeline. The Council will continue collaborating closely with the VA Board of Pharmacy, hospital pharmacies, and other stakeholders to ensure a seamless transition and minimize disruption to EMS operations.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation during this transitional period. We are dedicated to supporting you and your providers while upholding the highest standards of patient care across our region.

<https://lfems.org/index.php/65-csr-dea-guide-resources-for-agencies-is-here>

Warm regards,

*Tracey McLaurin*

Executive Director