



Tuolumne County Health & Human Services Agency

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Date: April 21, 2026

TO: Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors
Roger Root, County Administrator

FROM: Annie Hockett, HHSA Director
Michelle Clark, HHSA Assistant Director

SUBJECT: Approving the Ambulance Services Agreement between the County of Tuolumne and Mercy Medical Transport, Inc. with a base amount of \$6,556,467, with additional compensation available for performance-based incentives, as included in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Adopted Ambulance Enterprise Fund Budget, and authorizing the Chair to sign.

Background/Introduction

Since 1987, Ambulance service in Tuolumne County has been provided through a public/private partnership between the County of Tuolumne and Manteca District Ambulance Service (MDA). The County owns the facilities, vehicles, and equipment necessary to provide the services while MDA provides the staffing for the daily operations. Through Health and Human Services Agency, the County also provides the fiscal and administrative oversight for the ambulance service as well as the billing for those services.

The system currently delivers basic (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS) emergency medical services throughout the county by operating six ALS ambulances twenty-four hours a day out of five ambulance stations. ALS ambulances are staffed with at least one paramedic and an EMT. All ambulances, with the exception of Medic-41, participate in moving patients between facilities. Medic-41, stationed in Groveland, does not participate in the transfer rotation, as its operating costs are partially funded by South County taxpayers through a ballot measure. An additional ambulance is flexibly staffed for up to 24 hours per day to support interfacility transfers, provide coverage during extended transports and staffing shortages, enhance response during peak demand periods, and offer standby services for community events.

The agreement with MDA has been periodically renewed and renegotiated since 1987, with the most recent Request for Proposal (RFP) issued in 2004. The current contract with MDA expires on June 30, 2026. On June 24, 2025, MDA provided written notice of their intent not to renew or extend the contract beyond its expiration date, citing that the current contract amount and scope of work are no longer sustainable within their operational model. Efforts

to negotiate an amendment to the existing contract were made but were ultimately unsuccessful.

The County, through its Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), entered into an agreement with Healthcare Strategists (HCS) in March 2025, a specialized consulting firm, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system and to provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on potential system enhancements and model options. The evaluation advised that the optimal number of staffed ambulances should be increased to a total of five 24/7 ALS ambulances, two ALS ambulances operating twelve hours every day, and one BLS ambulance operating 10 hours every day. These recommendations were presented to your Board on November 4, 2025, and your Board approved staff recommendations to maintain the current public-private system model and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the next Ambulance Services Agreement.

Building on the EMS Assessment, this RFP was designed to enhance the delivery of ambulance services throughout Tuolumne County. It seeks to ensure high-quality, reliable 911 emergency and non-emergent responses, as well as interfacility transfers (IFTs). The attached infographic provides an overview of some of these enhancements to the EMS system. The procurement emphasizes system coverage, operational efficiency, and performance-based incentives tied to clinical outcomes, billing, and IFT response, and includes provider penalties for failure to meet defined performance standards. Proposers were required to demonstrate how they would maintain or improve the defined Scope of Services, including staffing, clinical oversight, training, administration, mutual aid and dispatch, while providing flexible strategies to optimize coverage and response for residents and visitors.

An RFP was published on December 19, 2025, with the deadline for RFP responses set for February 13, 2026. Three ambulance companies submitted proposals by the deadline; notably, MDA did not submit a proposal. On March 2, 2026, all three proposers gave in-person presentations to the RFP evaluation committee, which evaluated both the written proposals and presentations in accordance with established criteria.

Details

After careful consideration, the RFP was awarded to Mercy Medical Transport, Inc. ("Mercy") on March 5, 2025. HHSA staff and Mercy have successfully negotiated terms and agreements to ensure operational support for ambulance services within Tuolumne County commencing July 1, 2026.

Mercy Medical Transportation, Inc. brings 33 years of experience providing 9-1-1 Advanced Life Support (ALS) services in both rural and urban areas, including Mariposa County and San Diego. This family-owned company, located adjacent to Tuolumne County, operates within a rural system and maintains staffing levels roughly 20% above deployment schedules, demonstrating strong recruitment and retention. Their proposal highlights their strategic location to provide mutual aid and backup support to the hard-to-serve Don Pedro and Groveland communities, enhancing response reliability through their Mariposa unit in

Coulterville. Mercy Medical Transportation is skilled in leveraging technology, including Unit Hour Utilization metrics and heat maps, to monitor operations, ensure continuous quality improvement, and implement accountability measures in real time. Their comprehensive plan emphasizes patient- and system-focused outcomes, personnel accountability, employee wellness and fatigue prevention, and a system status plan that adjusts to call volume, peak demand, and Interfacility Transfer (IFT) response. Mercy has extended conditional offers of employment to all current MDA staff at the supervisory level and below assigned to Tuolumne County, ensuring a continuity of operations should your Board approve this agreement.

Fiscal Impacts

There is no cost to the County General Fund associated with the Ambulance Services Agreement with Mercy. Mercy will be compensated in an amount of \$6,556,467 for the first year, with an approximately 5.2% increase each subsequent year of the agreement. The agreement also includes performance-based incentives, which may increase total compensation beyond the scheduled monthly payment of \$546,372 if service benchmarks are exceeded. In addition to the incentives, the agreement includes penalties as well, for failing to meet established performance standards.

Recommendation:

It is recommended the Board approve the Ambulance Services Agreement between the County of Tuolumne and Mercy Medical Transport, Inc. with a base amount of \$6,556,467, with additional compensation available for performance-based incentives, as included in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Adopted Ambulance Enterprise Fund Budget and authorize the Chair to sign.



TUOLUMNE COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES JULY 1, 2026



EMS System Deployment Overview



Core 24/7 ALS Coverage

5 ALS Ambulances | 24 Hours/Day | 48/96 Schedule

Locations: 📍 Groveland | 📍 Soulsbyville / Mono Vista | 📍 Standard |
📍 Sonora / Columbia | 📍 Jamestown



Peak Demand Response Units

2 ALS Ambulances | 12 Hours/Day | 7 Days/Week | Based at Cedar Rd. North, Sonora

- 9-1-1 response and Interfacility Transfer during peak periods
- Used in high call volume areas
- Dynamic move-up plans to optimize Unit Hour Utilization (UHU), balance workload, reduce fatigue, and enhance response reliability
- En route to 90% of all emergency calls within 2 minutes or less, and 100% of all calls within 4 minutes



Support Transport Unit

1 BLS Ambulance | 10 Hours/Day | 7 Days/Week | Cedar Rd. North

- Interfacility Transfers (IFT)
- Low-acuity 9-1-1 (Alpha-Level)



System Oversight and Field Support

2 Supervisor Vehicles

- Complex calls | Major incidents | System Oversight | Deployment Coordination | Quality Assurance/Field Support | Safety & Risk Management | Backfill Coverage | Standby Events



WorkForce Wellness

- Just Culture™: Foster a culture that emphasizes learning over blame by encouraging reporting of safety concerns and unintended errors, distinguishing between honest mistakes (non-punitive) and reckless or negligent behavior (accountable).
- Use UHU and operational data to balance workload, reduce fatigue, and support safe staffing through dynamic deployment and shift limits (max 48 hours, 10 hours rest).
- Incumbent Workforce: Prioritizes hiring qualified incumbent staff with comparable or better pay and benefits to ensure a smooth transition.

Key System Features

- ✓ 24/7 Coverage
- ✓ Peak Surge Capacity
- ✓ Resource Optimization
- ✓ Optimal System Coordination
- ✓ Optimal Patient Outcomes
- ✓ Performance-Based Approach
- ✓ Workforce Wellness



Clinical Quality & Performance/Patient Care

Performance Domains

- Clinical Compliance
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Billing Compliance & Efficiency
- Electronic Patient Care Records (ePCRs) Accuracy & Completion
- Interfacility Transfers (IFT) Performance

Measured Through

- Real-time ePCR data & QA/QI review using technology
- Quarterly Contractor Report Card

Clinical and Billing Compliance Incentive/Penalty

- ≥ 90%: +1.5%
- 80-89.99%: +1.0%
- 70-79.99%: +0.5%
- 60-69.99%: No adjustment
- 50-59.99%: -0.5%
- 40-49.99%: -1.0%
- < 40%: -1.5%

IFT

- +\$100 per call for transports to destinations outside the County
- -\$1,000 per call when >5% of IFTs are completed by alternative providers dispatched to Contractor
- Incentives subject to compliance with County IFT policy

