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SFMD Finding Success With Their New Community Care Unit

Last year the Superstition Fire & Medical District (SFMD) took advantage of a unique opportunity to join with Mesa Fire and Medical Department (MFMD) in a regional grant through the National Health & Human Services (HHS) Department and The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), under the HHS Health Care Innovation Awards program, funded through the Affordable Health Care Act.

This **Community Care Response Initiative** grant involves an innovative new medical response model that focuses on in-home health care and reducing the number of non-critical admissions to local emergency rooms. This \$12.5 million award is designed to save Medicare, AZ Medicaid, and CHIP \$40 million over 3 years

In late January 2015, SFMD placed into service CCU263 which is their first new resource supporting this community care response initiative. Staffed with an Advanced Health Care Professional (a Registered Nurse Practitioner or Physician's Assistant) and an SFMD Captain/Paramedic, this unit responds in a modified ambulance to less critical EMS calls and performs post-discharge check-ups for people recently treated in local hospitals. The services provided by this unit include; in depth patient evaluations, suturing, minor trauma evaluations, cardiac diagnostic capabilities, pain management, prescription services, immunizations, health education, referral services, primary care consultations, sepsis evaluations, post discharge follow ups, and minor diagnostic testing.

The new model aims to reduce hospital readmissions post-discharge and provides field treatment and referral of low-acuity patients to reduce the use of the 911 system and unwarranted trips to the emergency department by providing low acuity patients with on-site evaluation and treatment; and/or referral to the most appropriate services, which reduce duplication efforts between emergency rooms and private physicians while reducing costs to the Medicaid/Medicare system.

“Our goal is to improve the delivery of healthcare in our community with this new model, bringing not only immediate relief to those who need it, but becoming part of the bigger solution to our health-care crisis,” stated Fire Chief Paul Bourgeois. SFMD just completed a lease-purchase of a new vehicle to support having a unit operating 24 hours per day 365 days per year throughout the fire district. Eventually, as this model proves to be advantageous, SFMD hopes to add more CCU units to its fleet including one dedicated to dealing with Behavioral Health Care needs.

“This model is designed to deliver better health care and lower costs to our customers by driving down the costs for Medicare & Medicaid,” said SFMD spokesman, Asst. Chief Dave Montgomery. “We believe this paradigm shift in the way we do business will save the system tens of millions of dollars over the next three years”, he continued. These units have now been operating for several months in Mesa and the fire district with positive results.

“This is an historic effort we are lucky to be a part of” stated Chief Bourgeois. “These are new, innovative and distinctly different services than provided by traditional EMS and are absolutely a “Medical” service that provides great value to our customers and to the health-care industry itself,” continued Bourgeois. “We regularly meet with hospital CEO’s and even more recently have met with major international insurance carriers to further define our role in the health-care system.”

If you would like to know more about the SFMD, please visit our web site at www.sfmd.az.gov, or call our offices at 480-982-4440.

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