

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

March 5, 2024

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**SUBJECT: INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT FOR 350 BELKNAP ARRESTEE
EMS CARE & TRANSPORT**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide information on the interlocal agreement (the “Agreement”) between the City of Fort Worth (the “City”) and the Metropolitan Area EMA Authority (“MedStar”) that outlines how emergency medical service (EMS) is provided for City of Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD) arrestees when they experience medical emergencies while in FWPD custody. The Agreement also states the terms and conditions under which the City will reimburse Medstar for EMS provided to individuals in FWPD custody.

Background

Individuals in the custody of the FWPD are transported by police car to the City’s holding facility at 350 West Belknap (the “Belknap Facility”). The arrested individual is processed into the Belknap Facility and detained until a Fort Worth Magistrate determines probable cause and thereafter transferred to the Tarrant County Sherriff’s Department (the “County”) through the adjoining underground tunnel or otherwise released from FWPD custody. Once transferred to the County, the arrested individual is no longer considered in the custody of the FWPD and their medical care becomes the responsibility of the County. The Tarrant County Hospital District, by and through the JPS Health Network (“JPS”), is tasked with providing care for County inmates. Medstar and JPS are currently negotiating the terms of an agreement that will cover EMS, and its associated costs, for those individuals in the County’s custody.

When an arrested individual complains of a medical condition necessitating the activation of EMS for treatment and transport to the hospital before being released from FWPD custody MedStar is activated to provide medical care and/or transportation. This happened about 508 times in FY23. MedStar bills the individual’s insurance provider. However, if the individual does not have insurance, the balance is written off as uncollectable.

The 350 Belknap Facility

The Belknap Facility is a detention center for individuals arrested by FWPD. It is designed to temporarily hold arrested individuals and is not equipped with medical equipment, and due to space constraints, there is no onsite medical care. When arrestees experience a medical emergency, 911 is called and MedStar is dispatched to handle the incident. Not all incidents result in hospital transport.

Arrestee EMS Data

Arrestee Patients By Fiscal Year – 350 Belknap					
	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY 22	FY 23
Insured	107	77	91	67	173
Written Off	301	293	338	216	335
Total Patients	408	370	429	283	508

Interlocal Agreement

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The Agreement is similar to the agreement MedStar utilizes with all the hospitals in the MedStar system, except that the rates for inmate transfers are set at the Medicare fee schedule (matching the JPS' contract rates). The purpose of the Agreement is to state the understanding between the City and Medstar concerning the provision of EMS for individuals in FWPD custody.

According to the Agreement, Medstar will provide medical evaluation, treatment, and transportation for emergency and non-emergency calls for service to persons confined in City holding facilities or otherwise in the custody of FWPD or its contractors. The Agreement requires Medstar to staff any ambulance providing this service with at least two individuals licensed or certified to render emergency medical care. Medstar will also make the initial determination whether a transport is an emergency or non-emergency situation.

The City initiates the services by contacting Medstar and requesting service. Medstar will charge the City fees as determined by the centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services fee schedule in effect for the locality at the time services are provided. Medstar will provide the City with a monthly invoice to include detailed information such as the date of service, relevant locations, miles traveled, costs, and the information concerning the individual who required EMS. The initial term of the Agreement will be for one (1) year with unlimited annual renewals thereafter. The total cost will be an annual amount not to exceed \$250,000.

Next Steps

City staff and MedStar are working together to evaluate opportunities to better align care provided with the medical complaints of the arrestees. There is a mutual desire to ensure the arrestee medical needs are addressed with the most appropriate resources, that may not always be an ambulance and EMS crew.

For questions regarding this report, please contact:

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