



3/4/2024

Hello, my name is Jennifer Kirchner. I am the Ambulance Director for the Murray County Medical Center – Murray County Ambulance Department in the Southwest corner of MN in the rural town of Slayton. I've been in EMS for 14 years. I run the service here at MCMC including professional job duties that come with being the director as well as working manager duties such as running as EMT in the back of the truck. We have two rigs that service 295 square miles in the county of Murray. Last year we ran 479 calls with myself, one full time EMT who joined our service in September 2023, and a part time office assistant who is also an EMT. The rest of the crew consists of 18 others that volunteer time so we can cover our 24/7 schedule and as many transfer requests from our hospital and surrounding local regional hospitals as we can take.

Our hospital, our service and I support the Emergency Ambulance Aid bill HF3992 and SF3886. We participated in the CMS and EMSRB financial survey helping bring to light the unsustainable reimbursement rates. Our financials are a constant struggle and have been the topics of many City and County wide discussions. Something that no one can come to an agreement on as we are not considered an essential service. We find no one is willing to step up and shoulder the burden with us.

Our staffing needs relies heavily on our 18 volunteers who have full-time careers outside of EMS. The increasing 911 calls and demands from not only our main rural hospital but the hospitals surrounding us for hospital-to-hospital transfers is beyond pushing the threshold of our ability to maintain functioning services. Weekly, we make transfers for other services because we are at max capacity. This includes the inevitable and forever never-ending staffing revolving door. I have seen so many resignations and retirements due to the heavy stress that we shoulder. The nature of this job, the 24/7 schedule and constant need for someone to cover calls is literally demand that never ends. The silent pressure and expectation to be ready at any given moment when you wear that pager is one that over times weighs so heavy and takes a toll that only the one shouldering that burden can feel.

Honestly our rural service needs a new ambulance, but the cost is so high that we must push our equipment to the max trying to squeeze out every last viable drop. These legislative bills don't solve the problem but it's a step in the right direction. It's acknowledging that we have a problem. What we are doing is just getting by. I'm blessed to hold this director position, a job that I sincerely love, but I'm also putting in 60-80+ hours a week just to make sure we have a legally staffed ambulance service. I know I can't run like this forever, but I truly have hope that MN can create a better future for EMS so it won't always be like this.

Thank you for listening,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Kirchner". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Jennifer Kirchner, EMT
Murray County Ambulance Director
Murray County Medical Center

Murray County Medical Center

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