



# Pinellas County

## Staff Report

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### **Subject:**

Agreement for Tactical Paramedic Program Support between the Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services Authority and the Pinellas County Sheriff.

### **Recommended Action:**

Approval and execution by the County Administrator of the Tactical Paramedic Program Support Agreement between the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Authority and the Pinellas County Sheriff.

- The Sheriff and EMS have partnered since the late 1980s to embed specially trained unarmed tactical paramedics in the Sheriff's special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team.
- Chapter 2019-77, Laws of Florida, amended sec. 790.25, F.S. permits Tactical Paramedics to carry firearms.
- The arming of tactical paramedics statutorily requires the Sheriff to train, certify and issue the firearms. The Sheriff will employ the tactical paramedics directly as part-time employees.
- EMS will continue to provide program support for the medical aspects of the Pinellas County Tactical EMS Team through this agreement.

### **Strategic Plan:**

Ensure Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

2.1 Provide planning, coordination, prevention, and protective services to ensure a safe and secure community.

Deliver First Class Services to the Public and Our Customers

5.1 Maximize partner relationships and public outreach.

5.3 Ensure effective and efficient delivery of county services and support.

### **Summary:**

On February 6, 2020 the Sheriff and Board of County Commissioners met in a work session regarding arming Tactical Paramedics. 2019-77 Laws of Florida amended 790.25, F.S. to allow paramedics embedded in SWAT teams to carry firearms. The Sheriff wants the paramedics to be armed to increase the safety of the deputies and the paramedics. The Commissioners and Sheriff agreed to transition the program to the Sheriff with the paramedics being part-time employees. EMS would continue to provide the support for the medical aspects of the program.

First Responders (Law/Fire/EMS) are seeing larger and more deadly SWAT and Active Shooter incidents nationally and locally. There were 31 SWAT callouts in 2019 which is an all-time high. Paramedics are regularly embedded with high risk warrant teams, fugitive teams, and called upon to support the FBI, FDLE, DHS, US Marshals, etc.

**Background/Explanation:**

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office has had Paramedics embedded in the SWAT Team since the late 1980s. Many lives have been saved or positively impacted to include deputies, police officers and civilians.

Pinellas County EMS, through the Ambulance Contractor, has provided all medical aspects of the Tactical EMS Program since its inception to include: personnel costs for training and operations, response vehicles, and all medical equipment and supplies.

In order to arm the Paramedics the program must transition to the Sheriff and EMS.

Under the proposed program EMS will reimburse the Sheriff for all personnel costs for training and operations of the 12 Person Team and a Team Leader. The annual cost of \$100,000 covers training hours and working hours for SWAT operations.

EMS will continue to provide vehicles, medical equipment, medical supplies, radios, uniforms, personal protective equipment (i.e. ballistic vests).

In a separate action the EMS Medical Direction Services Agreement will be amended to include the medical oversight of Tactical EMS Team at no additional cost.

In a separate action the Ambulance Services Agreement will be amended to eliminate the Ambulance Contractor's funding and responsibility for the program and transition the vehicles and equipment to EMS.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The costs associated with this agreement are included in the FY20 Adopted Budget, FY20 Estimate, and FY21 budget request for the Emergency Medical Services Fund. Total maximum estimated costs are \$175,000.00 annually (not to exceed \$120,000.00 for reimbursement to Sheriff for personnel costs; \$40,000.00 for operating supplies including personal protective equipment and vehicle; and \$10,000.00 excess liability coverage). The excess liability coverage is the only new cost.

**Delegated Authority:**

Authority for the County Administrator to sign this Agreement is granted under Code Section 2-62 (a) (1).

**Staff Member Responsible:**

James G. Fogarty, Director, Safety and Emergency Services

**Partners:**

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

**Attachments:**

Tactical Paramedic Program Agreement  
Tactical EMS Presentation