



October 2018

# RURAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

To examine barriers and develop solutions that enhance the delivery of rural medical care, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) was authorized to establish the Rural Emergency Medical Communications Demonstration Project (REMCDP), a \$2 million competitive grant program, with awards in 2016 and 2018. DHS evaluated applications based on innovation, impact on rural community, interoperability communications, stakeholder engagement, and a comprehensive approach. Grants were awarded to the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), which proposed to use existing communications infrastructure, improve operational effectiveness, and provide communications training to enable improved rural medical services through its First Hands Program.

## First Hands Program

The *First Hands Program* was developed by UMMC to improve the State of Mississippi's public safety communication system (with 30,000 users) and to extend its use to support rural medical care. The program combines medical and land mobile radio communications education and exercises to empower first providers giving medical aid. Participants receive training in communicating medically-significant information and providing immediate aid, hands-on radio operation, and life-saving medical applications and skills. To assist participants on-the-job, UMMC has designed and launched a smart phone mobile application that provides users with incident profile data capture, auto-population of Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, news and notifications based on login type, hospital diversion and vehicle status dashboard, and static resource information, such as protocols and other medical field reference data. Planned deliverables include just-in-time training and operational platform, a refresher program for graduates, and a companion course for public safety communicators entitled *First Voice*.

## Accomplishments

- Launched an informational webpage
- Created a marketing plan and engaged in outreach efforts with public safety groups
- Hosted more than 120 training classes with 12,500 participants
- Hired 19 UMMC Adjunct Instructors to teach programs and a Field Support Specialist to provide critical technical support
- Purchased mobile and portable radios, vehicles, and bleeding control kits to support training
- Developed a database system to track First Hands Program statistics, performance metrics, and participants' feedback
- Launched a mobile smart phone app providing incident profile data, GPS coordinates, and hospital diversion and vehicle status
- Designed an Automatic Vehicle Location system tied to existing public safety radio infrastructure
- Recognized for saving at least eight lives as a result of training and resources provided

## What's Next

OEC and UMMC are collaborating on lessons learned, best practices, and tools to share across the Nation and replicate the *First Hands Program* in other rural communities. OEC will also incorporate REMCDP results into the 2019 *National Emergency Communications Plan* and future DHS grants and services.

### For Additional Information:

Visit <https://www.dhs.gov/remcdp> or contact [OECGrants@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:OECGrants@hq.dhs.gov)