Deciding on ePCR Software:
A Guide for EMS Agencies

Developed with input from state data managers across the country, the purpose of this guide is to help EMS agencies make educated decisions when choosing an electronic patient care reporting (ePCR) vendor.

Do Your Homework

✓✓ Research Your Options

- Check online or call your state EMS office to find out what the requirements are for submitting data
- Ask for a list of ePCR vendors currently operating in your state

✓✓ Evaluate Your System's Needs

- Considerations:
    - Call volume
    - Personnel/staffing input
    - Level of skill of personnel
    - Current system capabilities
        - Do they meet your needs or do you want more (or less?)

✓✓ Learn About Vendor Options

- Is the vendor compliant with NEMSIS? *(click here for a list of software in compliance testing)*
- How long have they been in business?
- How many customers do they have?

✓✓ Get the Real Story

- Talk to current customers about their experience
    - Ask your state EMS office if there are services that are currently using the vendor, or have used the vendor in the past

oo Possible questions include:

- How long have you used this software?

- Do your providers find the software easy to use? Or what feedback have you received from field providers?

- How is the vendor's customer service?

  ✦✦ Are responses timely?

  ✦✦ Do your issues get resolved?

Considerations

Once you have gathered a good knowledge base of information, the following components will help you both during the decision-making process, and, later in more detail, the negotiation and contract phase, ensuring a smart software purchase.

✓✓ State Compliance

- What support will be offered to make sure that data export to the state is working and continues to work?

- Are web services available or does the export need to be manually downloaded and uploaded to the state?

- Successful submission of data to the state(s) in which you operate should be a minimum contract requirement.

✓✓ Hardware

- What hardware is needed?

- Can this be run off of Windows or Mac operating systems?

- Is it compatible with tablets?

✓✓ Tech Support

- Is support available 24/7?

- Is there a time limit before additional fees are charged?

- Vendors could be asked to provide their average and 90th percentile Issue and/or Bug identification to closure time.

✓✓ Training

- What training will be offered after purchase, both for those who manage the software and end users?

- What continuing education will be provided as updates or changes are made?

✓✓ Updates

- If maintenance is current, what will you be charged to stay current with your state and the national standard?

- Require the vendor to maintain state and national compliance within a certain amount of time of the new standard being adopted.

✓✓ Ownership

- Ensure that your service owns your data.

- What happens if the company goes bankrupt or is bought out by another company?

- How will past PCR's be brought into this new system? Will some data be lost?

✓✓ Reporting

- How easy is it to get information out of the system to look at performance?

- Can you easily create new reports?

- Ad hoc reports with 5-10 filters must be possible for easy extraction of specific information.

- Being able to add filters and work with the entire dataset or discrete time periods is a must.

- Does the software have dashboards?

- Make sure the vendor is required to give you every piece of data collected back through the reporting engine, not just the NEMSIS elements.