

## Utilization of Community Paramedics to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Janet Coffman, PhD, and Lisel Blash, MA

University of California, San Francisco, Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care (UCSF HWRC)

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### Objective

Some health systems and emergency medical services agencies in the United States are leveraging the versatility and experience of community paramedics to meet needs for COVID-19 testing, care, and vaccination. This report describes models of community paramedic practice that communities across the country have utilized during the pandemic and discusses changes in law and regulation that would facilitate more widespread adoption of these models.

### Methods

The authors searched databases of peer-reviewed literature, trade publications, and media reports, as well the websites of organizations that advocate for community paramedicine, to identify literature published from March 2020 through October 2021. Due to the emergent nature of the pandemic, few peer-reviewed studies of the use of community paramedics to meet COVID-19 needs were identified.

### Findings

Communities across the United States have utilized community paramedics to provide a wide range of services related to the COVID-19 pandemic, including administering tests, staffing quarantine and isolation sites, monitoring and caring for patients in their homes, and providing vaccinations to homebound persons. The feasibility of implementing these models in additional communities depending on multiple factors, including ability to recruit and retain sufficient staff to both provide these services and respond to 911 calls in a timely manner.

### Conclusions

Maximizing community paramedics' ability to meet needs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic will require changes to state laws and regulations that limit their scope of practice and the settings in which they can practice. Laws that require commercial health plans and Medicaid to reimburse emergency medical services agencies for community paramedicine services need to be enacted, and federal laws governing Medicare reimbursement changed. Further research is needed to better understand the extent of their contributions to COVID-19 response across the United States and the outcomes of the services they have provided.

### Key Words

COVID-19, community paramedicine, reimbursement, scope of practice, EMS

### Full Report

<https://healthworkforce.ucsf.edu/publications>