

Memphis, USA

The challenge: Curb misuse of the Memphis 911 EMS and improve the overall health of the city.

Context

The Memphis Fire Department staffs 34 ambulances that are often all in use. Running out of resources routinely delays care and risks lives.

The Memphis EMS spent \$37.4 million in fiscal year ending June 30, 2015 but recovered only \$20.8 million by billing for ambulance services.

Memphis ranks low in health indicators and has high readmission rates for acute conditions.

With a poverty rate just under 30%, Memphis is one of the country's most economically disadvantaged areas.

Several organizations have programs directed at improving the health and well-being of Memphians.

Findings

The 911 EMS response process needs to ensure emergency vehicles are available.

Several Memphis organizations work in silos and must learn to collaborate.

Memphis needs to provide affordable healthcare options that are as convenient as using 911.

Free transportation is one reason some citizens misuse 911 services.

Incentives for changed behavior and legal disincentives for 911 abuse will eliminate many offenses.

Health education needs to revert a deep-rooted and generational mind-set to ensure adoption of a new healthcare system.

Many of the IBM team's recommendations have little to no cost.

Where funding is necessary, Memphis has several potential sources for grants and sponsors.

Summary of recommendations



Drive collaboration among healthcare stakeholders

A cohesive leadership team will guide and monitor actions, as well as measure and promote success across the community.



Innovate the 911 EMS response process

Improved medical care for everyone within the limits of a well-funded EMS system.



Create and launch a citywide education campaign

Heightened awareness of the risks of 911 misuse will help change citizens' behaviors and reduce 911 calls for non-emergent care.

Provide convenient service alternatives

Strategically based healthcare options and transportation assistance for low- and no-income households.

Utilize impactful incentives and corrective actions

Significant reduction in abusive non-emergent 911 calls, with associated cost savings.

Vision

Memphis faces a significant challenge in curbing misuse of its 911 EMS system and improving the overall health of its citizens. But the community's understanding of this critical issue, the appetite for innovation and the community leaders' level of commitment to improve the health of Memphians prove this is the perfect time for action.

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