



Clinical Services Plan

2024-2029



NSW Ambulance





NSW Ambulance

Excellence in care

Our clinicians provide person-centred care along the patient care continuum in collaboration with our healthcare partners.

Mission

NSW Ambulance is an integral part of NSW Health delivering high quality mobile health care and rescue and retrieval services to the people of NSW.

Our Values

We share the NSW Health core values of collaboration, openness, respect and empowerment.

NSW Ambulance Strategic Priorities 2021-2026

- Our Organisation
- Our Services
- Our Stakeholders and Partners
- Our Resources

NSW Ambulance acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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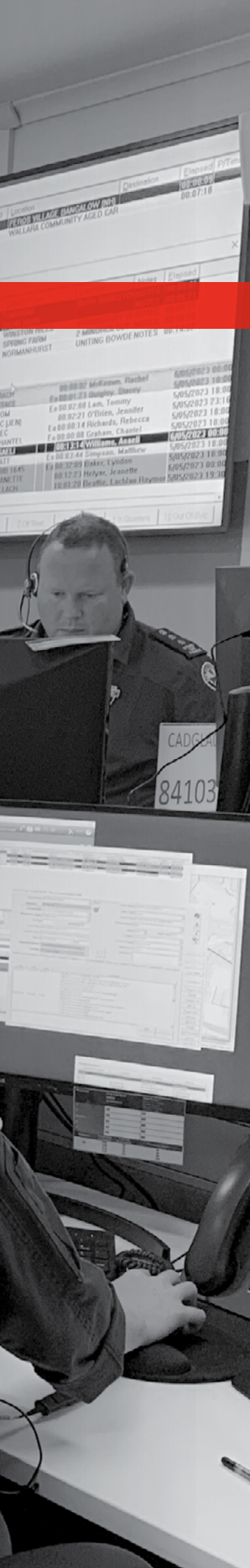


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NSW Ambulance



Foreword



Clare Beech ASM

*Executive Director,
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NSW Ambulance is proud to present the NSW Ambulance Clinical Services Plan 2024-2029. This plan describes the intent of NSW Ambulance in the development and delivery of clinical services for providing contemporary, quality and safe care.

NSW Ambulance is a multi-disciplinary mobile health service providing out of hospital care to over 8 million people in NSW, distributed across an area of 801,600 square kilometres. NSW Ambulance employs over 7,100 people, with over 90% being clinical staff involved in the front-line delivery of services.

NSW Ambulance has delivered significant improvements to care standards in recent years in the face of demand increases. Our patients' experience of our services are consistently positive with a high level of confidence in our clinicians.

Circumstances can be demanding, with decision-making that requires effective collaboration across multiple professions and organisations. Our clinicians make decisions about the most appropriate care to deliver in a complex system characterised by significant variation in patient case mix, care pathways and linked service providers.

In recent years, new clinical programs have generated much interest within the wider healthcare community with our clinicians operating as value-based mobile health providers who are integrated with an array of healthcare partners to improve the health of communities with emphasis on decision-making, diagnosis, treatment and referral.

This plan includes focus areas for providing person-centred services including virtual care, emergency care and chronic, complex care and navigating patients to a range of healthcare providers. Development of the Role Delineation of Services document has identified appropriate service types and clinician mixes to align to the health needs of communities.

The Clinical Services Plan 2024-2029 supports NSW Ambulance's commitment to deliver quality and safe out of hospital care to address the current and future health needs of NSW's large and diverse population.



Introduction

This plan describes NSW Ambulance's clinical priorities aligned to five focus areas:

- Protecting the health of communities
- Investing in our people
- Addressing the health needs of priority cohorts
- Committing to high value care
- Strengthening partnerships

Strategic Policy Alignment

The NSW Ambulance Clinical Services Plan is informed by Redefining our Future, NSW Ambulance Vision, the NSW Ambulance Strategic Plan 2021-2026, Future Health: Guiding the next decade of care in NSW 2022-2032 and Regional Health Plan 2022-2032.

The plan aims to deliver on the NSW Health vision: "A sustainable health system that delivers outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled".

Our Vision

The Clinical Services Plan describes a vision for NSW Ambulance's place in an integrated health system that supports people to stay well, to achieve better health outcomes and experiences for communities.

We use a demand-based approach in our service planning for delivering our services with the greatest potential to address health needs. We envisage a future where we are integrated with other healthcare providers and where our clinicians embrace innovative, person-centred and sustainable referral options.

To achieve this we need to work with our partners to develop a shared, coordinated and governed approach to patient care with high levels of trust from all stakeholders.





Need for Innovation

The traditional approach of out of hospital patient care – treatment at the scene and transport to hospital - is only one of multiple options in the environment of modern health care provision. Innovation is required to achieve currency with community expectations and for NSW Ambulance to contribute to a sustainable and accessible health system.

A combination of the following factors is driving requirement for innovation:

Population Growth

The population of NSW is growing with increasing demand for ambulance services.

Ageing Population

As the population ages, chronic disease is increasing with a requirement to embrace innovative approaches other than traditional acute care.

Increasing Utilisation

Multiple factors including medical advances, changing attitudes and an evolving healthcare landscape have led to our resources being called for on an increasing basis.

Community Expectations

Increasingly, communities are expecting to access care in a way that is convenient to them and consistent with their values. They expect an integrated health system with services working together to improve health and wellbeing.

Increasing Health Costs

Health costs are increasing with innovation required to maximise the potential of limited resources.

Targeting Vulnerable Cohorts

Addressing the needs of some specific patient cohorts and populations requires a targeted approach. Social determinants of health such as income, education and housing can strengthen or undermine health outcomes.

Information and Communications Technology

Information and communications technology is changing how we provide care with opportunities to collaborate and share information across geographical areas and health services.

Presently, around two-thirds of the current disease burden in NSW is due to conditions that could be managed outside a hospital setting. We know we need a shift in perspective. This will be achieved by building on our existing services, developing new clinical and virtual care programs and strengthening partnerships with other healthcare providers.



Challenges for Change

Demographic factors, including population growth and ageing, have contributed to increasing demand for our services and ongoing growth in demand is projected. Current population projections indicate NSW is expected to grow by over 85,000 people each year on average until 2041.

Based on recent trends, the population of regional NSW will increase by 570,000 to 3.7m in 2041. Greater Sydney's population will grow to approximately 6.1m by 2041 – over a million more people than currently live in the region.

Change enablers

- Partnering with government, community and consumers to plan, deliver and evaluate our health services
- Supporting our workforce by creating satisfying working environments that stimulate passion, inquisitiveness and a commitment to improvement
- Investing in information and communications technology that supports improved patient outcomes
- Championing education and training programs
- Driving research and innovation
- Committing to patient safety and service quality

Our partners

- Our patients, carers and community
- Our staff
- Local Health Districts (LHD)
- NSW Ministry of Health (MOH)
- Primary Health Networks (PHN)
- Health Education and Training Institute (HETI)
- Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI)
- Bureau of Health Information (BHI)
- Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC)
- Universities and research organisations
- Health Infrastructure (HI)
- Professional colleges
- HealthShare NSW
- eHealth NSW
- Non-Government Organisations (NGO)



NSW Ambulance Activity Features 2022/23



Our patients

46,000 calls transferred to secondary triage, with **12,300** not requiring an ambulance response

1,175,090 Triple Zero (000) calls received with **1,068,861** answered within 10 seconds

1,382,550 responses representing an average of one response every 22.8 seconds

8.42 minutes median response time to our most critical patients (P1A)

774,264 Patients transported

Aeromedical

5,832 Helicopter Missions with **3,720** patients transported

4,385 Fixed Wing Missions with **6,512** patients transported

4,340 Aeromedical Road Retrieval Missions with **3,671** patients transported



Stations

239 Operational ambulance stations

9 Paramedic Response Points



Our fleet

1,753 Operational vehicles

12 Helicopters

8 Fixed wing aircraft



Our people

7,137 People work at NSW Ambulance





Our Health Care Team

NSW Ambulance employs a multidisciplinary health care team including, but not limited to, paramedics, doctors, nurses, clinical volunteers and control staff. Our people work in various team configurations and contexts to bring health care to patients at the point of need. Our registered health practitioners are qualified and equipped to ensure patients receive the best possible clinical care when they call for help, regardless of whether that care is provided virtually or in face to face engagement.

NSW Ambulance is part of a wider healthcare team including Ministry of Health, LHDs, PHNs and NGOs providing a range of complementary specialities across the healthcare landscape. The importance of partnerships cannot be underestimated with strong linkages, meaningful engagement and collaboration required to achieve healthier populations.

NSW Ambulance is a statewide service providing out of hospital care in both high density metropolitan and low density remote locations. Optimising care in multiple geographical settings is informed by a Role Delineation of Services with service planning principles utilised to determine location service models. NSW Aeromedical teams have the ability to access the majority of NSW locations where specialist skills may be required. The ability to provide care in multiple settings and geographical locations signifies NSW Ambulance's elemental status within NSW Health.

Control Centres

Control Centres manage point of call care, prioritisation and dispatch with support from the Virtual Clinical Care Centre (VCCC) in providing secondary triage, advice and referral. Communications Assistants and Control Centre Officers play a critical role in patient care due to managing initial patient contact and coordinating the patient journey from point of call to arrival of clinicians on scene or referral to healthcare partners.

Paramedics

Paramedics are registered health practitioners with the qualifications, knowledge, skills, capabilities and judgement to provide urgent and non-urgent mobile health care to the community across age and acuity spectra. They assess each situation to determine the nature and severity of problems and apply the required knowledge and experience to provide

person-centred care with the best interest of patients as their primary concern and responsibility.

Paramedic Specialist roles support the provision of advanced care. These include:

- Intensive Care Paramedic (ICP): paramedic specialists with advanced training, knowledge and skills in the management of critically unwell patients.
- Extended Care Paramedic (ECP): paramedic specialists with advanced training, knowledge and skills in the management of low acuity patients and referral pathways.
- Critical Care Paramedic (CCP): paramedic specialists working as part of a critical care medical team or with other CCPs providing care in the air, in and between metropolitan, regional and remote health facilities and in remote or austere conditions.
- There are number of other skillsets that enable clinicians to be able to access patients in trapped, remote and austere locations. These include: Rescue, Special Operations Team (SOT), Remote Area Access (RAA), Helicopter and Alpine Paramedics.

Clinical Volunteers

Clinical Volunteers provide care in their communities and are accredited, trained and administered under the direct jurisdiction of NSW Ambulance. Clinical Volunteers play a vital and valued role in the provision of patient care in multiple NSW communities.

Nurses

Nurses are employed as Aeromedical Critical Care Flight Nurse Midwives undertaking fixed wing retrievals and performing critical care triage and telehealth clinical support in the Aeromedical Control Centre. Nurses also perform specialist secondary triage within VCCC.

Doctors

Critical Care Doctors are employed within Aeromedical working in medical teams with CCPs and Flight Nurses and undertaking critical care telehealth support across NSW Health as State Retrieval Consultants. Doctors also provide medical leadership in the office of the Director of Medical Services and undertake VCCC support roles.





NSW Ambulance Care Programs

The **Emergency and Critical Care Program** is about ensuring resources are in place with the right knowledge and skill sets for patients experiencing medical emergencies. Patients receive assessment, treatment and transfer to definitive care with the clinical expertise to maximise chances of a good recovery.

Features include:

- Recognition of critical illness or injury at the point of first contact
- Prioritisation of lifesaving interventions over non-essential activities
- Relief of pain and suffering
- Support, where needed, by clinicians with enhanced skills and additional experience, either in person or through VCCC
- Referral to definitive care, with pre-notification to activate an appropriate response

The **Retrieval Program** utilises NSW Ambulance clinicians by both road and air retrieval services to transfer patients from lower acuity facilities to those capable of providing definitive care. Retrievals represent a significant portion of NSW Ambulance workload with Aeromedical teams facilitating retrievals by road, helicopter and fixed wing for a subset of higher acuity patients. Modern healthcare is dependent on referral from smaller facilities to those providing specialist services and also for first presentations by patients residing in regions where specialist services are not available. Intrinsicly, this necessitates travel to occur between locations. In many areas, NSW Ambulance represents the singular portal for undertaking retrievals, identifying NSW Ambulance as an essential stakeholder in health system effectiveness.

The **Community Paramedicine Program** represents an emerging domain with the potential to complement and enhance provision of health services to the community in collaboration with other providers. The program will develop, test, refine

and implement a model of Community Paramedicine suitable for health care delivery with NSW Ambulance continuing to strengthen partnerships with LHDs, GPs and community health organisations.

The **Integrated and Alternative Care Program** establishes referral pathways for clinicians in both metropolitan and regional settings across NSW. Integrated Care involves the provision of seamless care that responds to all of a person's health needs. This means developing a system of care that is safe, efficient and effective. This program emphasises working with the rest of the health system to improve health outcomes with the experience of care based around the changing needs and expectations of the individual.

The **Virtual Clinical Care Program** delivers specialised secondary triage advice and referral at the point of call, to connect patients with the care they need. The goal is to ensure patients who call for help receive the most appropriate care for their condition, at the right time and by the right healthcare provider. This is a positive step for bridging gaps for patients and the care they are seeking. It facilitates a greater level of sophistication and clinical decision-making with collaboration between NSW Ambulance and other healthcare providers.

The **Building Resilient Communities Program** is about partnering with emergency services and LHDs to help communities better withstand natural disasters and other emergencies when they occur. Our Clinical Volunteer program is an example of great work being delivered through strong community relationships.

The **Intra-facility Support Program** helps normalise the clinical support our clinicians can provide rural health care facilities in managing medical emergencies. Our Community Emergency Response System Program (CERS Assist) is an example of this.



Focus Areas

Protecting the health of communities

We will implement a Patient and Consumer Engagement Strategy to incorporate the essential contribution consumers, carers and communities make to the design, quality, equity and management of health care provision.

We will establish a Patient Service Charter describing the rights that consumers and carers can expect when they are in our care.

We will implement the NSW Health Elevating the Human Experience program to ensure that patients and caregivers are supported across the continuum of care.

We will increase the capabilities of our Virtual Clinical Care Program to safely divert non-emergency callers to care pathways that are most suited to their care needs as aligned to ongoing evaluation, community need and NSW Health priorities and enhance real-time clinical support for our clinicians.

We will develop a Clinical Volunteer Strategy and support our clinical volunteers to provide timely, quality care and to foster resilience when communities experience health emergencies and severe weather events.

We will develop, test, refine and implement a model of Community Paramedicine to complement and enhance provision of health services to communities in collaboration with other providers.

We will implement operational and training strategies to improve out of hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) rates including maintaining a public access defibrillator database and promoting the GoodSam app.

We will navigate our role in major incidents and provide clinical support, training and equipment for declared emergencies within NSW and in support of other jurisdictions as part of the NSW Ambulance Emergency Management Strategy.

We will progress a Control Centre Reform program for responding to time critical emergency calls to provide urgent medical care for people whose lives are at immediate risk.

We will continuously improve and evaluate our current acute clinical programs including cardiac, stroke and trauma in collaboration with our healthcare partners.

We will contemporise the NSW Ambulance Response Grid to address demand increases, operational changes impacting dispatch practices, evolving models of care and the changing landscape of telehealth and virtual care services.

Investing in our people

We will ensure our clinicians are supported with a robust clinical decision-making environment supporting safe delivery of person-centred care with alignment and integration to broader clinical practice. It will be based in evidence and allow clinicians to exercise their professional responsibility as registered health practitioners.

We will support innovative approaches to clinical redesign and ensure safe and effective workforce practice models are reflective of communities by location, specialty and skills.

We will promote a culture of collective leadership where staff feel supported to intervene and solve problems to create environments for safe, innovative and high quality care.

We will identify opportunities for ongoing development of the paramedic scope of practice including innovative techniques and equipment. This will foster leadership growth and mentoring with participation in research regarding safety and efficacy of new interventions to improve patient outcomes and reduce morbidity and mortality.

We will implement a Credentialing Framework to ensure clinicians are confident and capable to deliver care according to their authorised scope of practice to support the provision of safe care to the community.

We will invest in an Education Program that is a core component of annual credentialing requirements for maintaining clinical currency with a focus on continuous improvement and tailored to include current NSW Health priorities.





We will define a clinical career pathway allowing clinicians to identify and take the necessary steps to fulfil their career objectives as part of the NSW Ambulance Talent & Capability Strategy.

We will maintain a culture of learning via professional development and educational opportunities, build and maintain workforce capability to ensure success of new clinical programs and support new staff through structured mentoring and clinical placements for tertiary students.

We will contemporise our Clinical Practice Guidelines and commit to Paramedic, Intensive Care Paramedic, Extended Care Paramedic, Critical Care Paramedic and Flight Nurse Uplift programs.

We will further develop partnerships with HETI, CEC, and the tertiary education sector for better alignment between education outcomes and workforce needs. We will develop new multidisciplinary models of learning with use of simulated environments and increased access to further education.

We will review and renew our Clinical Supervision Model for facilitating a positive workplace culture and empowering staff to work, innovate and learn together in safe environments that promote accountability.

Addressing the health needs of vulnerable cohorts

We will continue to take action regarding Closing the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal people compared to the broader population. We will develop an Aboriginal Health Plan and implement Aboriginal Liaison Officer positions to facilitate culturally safe care and establish formal transfer of care pathways.

We will ensure safe and successful transfer of care between NSW Ambulance and other healthcare providers and continued engagement in programs that serve older people. Older people have a greater propensity to experience significant chronic and complex conditions as well as co-morbidities.

We will collaborate with our healthcare partners to improve care for people with chronic and complex conditions including diabetes, heart disease, asthma, COPD and renal disease with treatment of a greater proportion of care in non-inpatient settings.

We will maintain continuous improvement of mental health care including clinical risk assessment, preliminary mental health assessment, clinical stabilisation and transfer of care and collaborate effectively with stakeholders.

We will develop training resources to build confidence in staff when caring for people with disabilities in line with the NSW Health Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

We will maintain continuous improvement of the Authorised Care Plan program to facilitate planned care for complex patients. We will develop safe pathways to authorise care to be delivered outside the standard scope of paramedic practice for these patients.

We will continuously improve the Frequent Caller Management program in consultation with patients and other stakeholders. We will seek to help them manage their conditions more effectively with increased appropriateness of contact with NSW Ambulance.

We will work with the health system to facilitate better access to definitive care including at identified regional locations where increased referrals to larger regional hospitals impacts local ambulance availability.

We will maintain a focus on regional healthcare and work with our healthcare partners to address challenges for accessing care through better integration and identifying strategies where NSW Ambulance can make a positive contribution.

We will recognise diversity in our patient population including LGBTQIA, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), children and young people, victims of violence, abuse and neglect, refugees, and people in low socioeconomic deciles and reduce barriers for accessing healthcare for vulnerable groups.



Committing to high value care

We will implement a Clinical Strategy that is person-centred, clinically-led, evidence-based and value-driven. This will aim to reduce morbidity and treat reversible causes of death, enhance experiences of care, create systems which support clinicians, invest in clinical leadership, embed clinical research and evaluation into clinical practice and provide sustainable and cost-effective clinical services.

We will maintain the Clinical Practice Committee as custodian of clinical practice standards and peak decision-making body on issues relating to clinical practice, procedures, medications, and clinical equipment and consideration of relevant advice issued by NSW Health.

We will implement a Role Delineation of Services to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner by clinicians. This will be based on a set of criteria regarding patient safety, case volume and case mix that facilitates an appropriate critical mass to maintain different scopes of clinical practice.

We will continuously improve the Extended Care Paramedic (ECP) Program, including training, tasking, equipment, role in telehealth and review the ECP scope of practice.

We will deliver Safety and Quality training using foundational, intermediate and advanced pathways to build capacity and ensure the CEC Safety and Quality Curriculum is available and utilised by clinicians.

We will operate Quality Audit Reporting Systems (QARS) and Quality Improvement Data Systems (QIDS) with locally developed action plans and improvement activities led by champions in each clinical area for continuous improvement and consumer engagement.

We will work with BHI to improve Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) and Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) to assess the quality of health care experiences and to inform service changes.

We will investigate future opportunities to

undertake clinical trials and review current practice to address the effectiveness and efficiency in the way we operate based on evidence based methodologies.

We will develop a Clinical Data Strategy for linking NSW Ambulance and LHD clinical data sets for timely and effective interchange of data integrating our clinicians with emergency departments and other healthcare systems.

We will investigate further opportunities for digitally enabled healthcare, including use of telehealth supported by accelerated investment in systems, infrastructure, security and intelligence and establishment of a single digital patient record.

We will commit to service planning that is agile and responsive to changes in demand and future care needs, including demographic and social shifts, the needs and expectations of patients and communities and research, technology and innovation.

We will reduce our environmental and carbon footprint over time and deliver more environmentally sustainable healthcare in line with the Net Zero by 2040 Strategy.

Strengthening partnerships

We will develop a Clinical Partnership Framework detailing the priorities, processes and values NSW Ambulance uses to support a values-based and standardised approach to partnering with other organisations.

We will strengthen partnerships with Ministry of Health, LHDs, PHNs and other healthcare providers to expand integrated care including having an increased number of sustainable and safe patient referral options.

We will ensure Integrated Care referral processes and guidelines have been developed collaboratively with high level sponsorship across multiple agencies.

We will develop a co-commissioning strategy with LHDs and PHNs for a referral program to address gaps in patient care and embed local accountability to ensure care is truly integrated.



We will strengthen strategic partnerships with the tertiary sector to be interconnected in multi-disciplinary health service delivery, knowledge creation and workforce capability development.

We will develop a NSW Ambulance Research Strategy and partner with universities and other academic organisations to progress national and international paramedicine and out-of-hospital and retrieval medicine research and clinical programs.

We will harness opportunities available through eHealth to ensure clinicians are supported in consultation, referral, access to expert advice, triage, retrieval and transfer and guidance.

We will identify additional opportunities to support our healthcare partners such as Clinical Emergency Response System (CERS assist) which provides paramedic support for patients presenting with acute care needs in a number of regional hospitals.

We will engage in Community Education Strategy Building to build resilience and knowledge to enable communities to plan and manage their own health challenges.

We will work with the health system to develop strategies for providing end to end medical and clinical oversight for patients requiring inter-facility transfer based on patient need.

We will engage in health promotion to improve community resilience, including programs such as Restart a Heart Day to raise awareness and educate the community about CPR and AEDs in communities.

Conclusion

The NSW Ambulance Clinical Services Plan 2024-2029 will guide NSW Ambulance through the next five years in terms of clinical priorities to improve experiences of care in the spaces where patients and clinicians interact. NSW Ambulance is committed to excellence in care with high patient and clinician satisfaction levels, supported by an integrated, collaborative approach that ensures the right care is delivered, at the right time, in the right place and by the right provider.



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