



America's Blood Centers®  
It's About *Life*.

# Improving Patient Access to Blood Transfusions on Ambulances

## The Critical Need for Prehospital Blood Transfusions

Timely blood transfusions can mean the difference between life and death. Research shows that every minute of delay in accessing blood increases mortality odds by 5%. With more than half of trauma victims dying before ever reaching the hospital, every moment counts. However, a critical gap exists in our emergency medical services: most patients don't receive their first transfusion until they reach the hospital, regardless of transport time.

## The Current Landscape

Prehospital blood transfusions benefit patients with severe bleeding, including trauma, postpartum hemorrhage, or aortic and brain aneurysms. However, due to outdated payment policies and scope of practice laws, the ability to carry and administer prehospital blood is limited. According to data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, between 1-2% of emergency medical services (EMS) currently carry blood for transfusions. Because of the lack of dedicated reimbursement through traditional insurance programs, these EMS' must rely on local tax support or an organization capable of absorbing the increased cost.

## The Root of the Problem: Outdated Reimbursement Policies

The core issue lies with our insurance programs' payment policies. Currently, Medicare, TRICARE, Medicaid, and most private insurance plans have outdated bundled payment rates insufficient to cover the cost of the necessary infrastructure and blood components required for transfusions. This oversight creates a financial barrier that is insurmountable for many EMS' where blood transfusions could have the greatest impact.

## The Call to Congress

To address this critical gap in emergency care, America's Blood Centers and its members urge Congress to modernize our nation's approach to prehospital blood transfusions by:

- Updating federal insurance program payment policies to provide sufficient reimbursement for prehospital blood transfusions
- Updating TRICARE payment policy to remove financial barriers and allow for broader adoption of prehospital blood transfusions, supporting TRICARE's mission to improve the health of the military and their families which, in turn, helps support the security of the United States.

TRICARE is uniquely positioned to benefit from updated payment policies that sufficiently reimburse for the transfusion of blood since they cover beneficiaries longer term than private insurance and can consider the cost savings in hospital care to balance the increased ambulance costs. In addition, when beneficiaries receive the benefits of decreased mortality and disability, the Department of Defense saves on survivor benefits and disability payments.

This small change will save lives, reduce healthcare disparities, and significantly improve our nation's emergency medical response capabilities.