



SANFORD AMBULANCE VITAL SIGNS

Fall 2025

Compassion, Excellence and Community

Sanford Ambulance Begins Carrying Whole Blood

Each year, more than 61,000 people in the U.S. die from blood loss. Some of these deaths result from traumatic events like car accidents or gun violence, while others stem from non-traumatic causes. Regardless of the cause, severe bleeding is a leading factor in preventable deaths. Many people assume that ambulances routinely carry and administer blood to patients in need, but that's not always the case. Although on-scene blood transfusions can save lives, very few EMS agencies are equipped to provide them. According to a 2024 study, only about 1% of the more than 11,000 EMS agencies nationwide carry blood supplies.

In January 2025, a team from Sanford, including several doctors and paramedics, traveled to Texas to attend the National Whole Blood Academy, where they learned about implementing blood transfusions in pre-hospital settings. By July, Sanford Ambulance began carrying whole blood, enabling paramedics to administer life-saving transfusions on scene - an especially critical intervention for trauma patients.

Just days after Sanford Ambulance launched its blood program, it proved life-saving. On July 17, Philip Maenza Jr. was riding his motorcycle near Mapleton when he crashed, suffering a fractured femur that led to severe internal bleeding. He became the first person in North Dakota to receive a blood transfusion from a ground ambulance. In cases of major blood loss, every minute matters. Blood is essential for transporting oxygen and nutrients to cells and keeping organs functioning. When blood volume drops too low, these critical processes begin to fail.

Dr. Jason Van Valkenburg, Sanford Ambulance Medical Director says, "Hopefully there are not a lot of patients that need it, but for those that do, it can be critical and life-saving. If a patient is actively exsanguinating or hemorrhaging and losing blood, and we can give them blood, that might be the difference in saving their life".

Currently, the blood used in Sanford Ambulance's program is flown in from across the country. To expand this life-saving initiative, more local donors are urgently needed. If you're interested in helping, you can schedule a donation through Vitalant in Fargo. Please use the code GiveHope-9967-R when registering.



2025 Mission: Lifeline Gold Plus Award

When someone in our community suffers a heart attack or stroke, EMTs and paramedics are often the first to provide care. The type of care that these patients receive immediately after their signs and symptoms start can mean the difference between life and death. The role of EMS in the system-of-care for cardiac and stroke patients is crucial and often sets the course for the patient's outcome.

Mission: Lifeline EMS is a program launched in 2014 by the American Heart Association designed to showcase and recognize Emergency Medical Service organizations across the nation for excellent STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) care. A STEMI is a specific type of heart attack caused by a complete blockage of blood flow to the heart. Every year, more than 250,000 people experience a STEMI. To prevent death, it's critical to restore blood flow as quickly as possible, either by surgically opening the blocked vessel or by giving clot-busting medication. In order to have the best outcome after a STEMI, timely treatment is imperative. The AHA's Mission: Lifeline award helps celebrate the achievements of prehospital providers and their collaboration with each other and destination hospitals specific to STEMI patient care.



This year, Sanford Ambulance was awarded the highest Mission: Lifeline award – Gold, plus the “Target Stroke Honor Roll” and a “Target Heart Attack Honor Roll” designations. The Mission: Lifeline Gold designation means that Sanford Ambulance has taken the initiative to help advance the system of care for patients with high-risk, time-sensitive diseases such as severe heart attacks and strokes. The Target Heart Attack Honor Roll designation means that Sanford Ambulance has focused efforts on coordinating care between the pre-hospital care and the destination hospital. The Target Stroke Honor Roll designation honors hospitals for achieving specific, time-sensitive quality targets for treating acute ischemic stroke patients. These awards recognize Sanford Ambulance for implementing quality improvement measures for the treatment of patients who experience severe heart attacks and strokes. This award puts Sanford Ambulance in an elite group of pre-hospital providers who are recognized by the American Heart Association for their commitment and success in implementing a higher standard of care, by ensuring that every STEMI patient receives treatment according to nationally accepted evidence-based recommendations and standards. Sanford Ambulance has received the highest award every year since the inception of Mission: Lifeline and is one of only 25 across the nation to have done so.

“Sanford Ambulance is dedicated to providing optimal care for heart attack patients and making our service among the best in the country, and the American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline program is helping us accomplish that by implementing processes for improving systems of care with the goal of improving the quality of care for all acute coronary syndrome patients,” said Kathy Lonski, Sanford Ambulance's Quality Improvement Advisor. “We are pleased to be recognized for our dedication and achievements in emergency medical care for all cardiac patients.” The Mission: Lifeline initiative provides tools, training and other resources to support heart attack care following protocols from the most recent evidence-based treatment guidelines.



HEALTH HIGHLIGHT

Hypothermia or Frostbite?

Winter is almost here, and that means that it's time to think about staying warm! In cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced, which can lead to serious health problems.

Check out some tips from the CDC on how to spot and treat hypothermia and frostbite!

FROSTBITE

A victim is often unaware of frostbite because frozen tissue is numb.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Redness or pain in any skin area may be the first sign of frostbite
- A white or grayish-yellow skin area
- Skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- Numbness or a "pins and needles" feeling



HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia often occurs at very cold temperatures, but can occur at cool temperatures (above 40°) if a person is wet (from rain, sweat or water) and becomes chilled.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Shivering
- Exhaustion
- Confusion
- Fumbling hands
- Memory loss
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness
- Very low energy



WHO IS AT HIGH RISK?

Older adults without proper food, clothing or heat



People who stay outdoors for long periods (homeless, hunters, etc.)

People who drink alcohol in excess or use illicit drugs



Babies sleeping in cold rooms

TREATMENT

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible
- Get them into a warm room or shelter
- Remove any wet clothing
- Warm them under dry layers of clothing or blankets

MORE TIPS:

When the weather is extremely cold, try to stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress properly. Make sure the body parts most often affected by frostbite are covered in warm, dry clothing. These include the nose, ears, toes, cheeks, chin and fingers.



For more information on winter weather and cold emergencies, please go to www.cdc.gov

Sanford Ambulance EMT Grateful for Home

Sanford Ambulance Paramedic Katie Kemper was recently the recipient of a home built through Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that partners with people to build or improve homes in local communities and around the world. The primary purpose of Habitat for Humanity is to eliminate substandard housing and make decent, affordable housing a reality for everyone. Families in need of affordable housing apply for the program, contributing "sweat equity" by helping to build their own homes.

Katie had always dreamed of having a backyard where she and her daughter Karsyn could relax and spend time together. After receiving her new home, Katie now plans to help pay it forward by helping on future Habitat for Humanity builds. Katie is excited to put in the work to give back to others the way so many gave their time to help her. "Being able to help other people with their homes to pay it forward is going to be a really fun adventure, and it's also going to be really fun for Karsyn. She's looking forward to helping others as well."



Sanford Ambulance Hosts Harvard Research Group



In July, four researchers from Harvard visited Sanford Ambulance as part of a national study on rural trauma services. Their research focuses on identifying disparities, barriers, and challenges in delivering trauma care in rural areas, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes in underserved communities across the country. During their visit, the team met with Sanford Ambulance's leadership to learn how services are provided across Cass and Clay counties. They also had the opportunity to ride along with several ambulance crews to gain firsthand insight into rural emergency response.

BLAST Babysitting Camp



Babysitting Lessons and Safety Training (BLAST) Babysitting Camp is a course developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics that teaches teens and pre-teens about the responsibilities of caring for children. Using scenario-based learning, the class addresses babysitting, as well as staying home alone safely and dealing with emergency situations.

Participants in BLAST Camp will learn CPR and first aid for children, when to call 911, and what will happen if they need emergency assistance. Students will also learn diaper changing techniques and will go home with fun & educational activities for children to do. To register for a BLAST course, please visit the Sanford Health EMS Education website at shemse.org.

Sanford Ambulance Blood Drive

In a continued effort to give back to the community that we serve, Sanford Ambulance recently hosted a blood drive. The event, which took place on Thursday, August 28, was organized in partnership with Vitalant. Employees and local residents came together to donate blood, potentially saving hundreds of lives. During the event, 20 volunteers donated blood and five completed a Power Red (double red cell) donation, which resulted in 24 units of blood and four units of plasma for our community! This blood has the potential to impact many lives!

“Hosting this blood drive aligns with our values of service and community,” said Kathy Lonski, Clinical Improvement Advisor and blood drive coordinator. “We are proud of our employees for stepping up to contribute to such an important cause.” Vitalant representatives expressed their gratitude for the event, emphasizing the critical role that our community plays in maintaining blood supply, especially in times of high demand.



Community Collaboration

Fire departments in Fargo, Moorhead, and West Fargo regularly respond to medical emergencies alongside Sanford Ambulance. These firefighters are trained to provide immediate, life-saving care before paramedics arrive.

Each year, all three departments participate in hands-on training sessions with Sanford Ambulance, where they review key medical procedures and refresh their knowledge of essential tools and technology. This year, firefighters reviewed protocol changes, learned about changes in care for patients who experience cardiac arrest, and practiced using child-restraint devices found in the ambulance.



The collaboration with our local firefighters ensures seamless care for patients and strengthens the bond between our emergency responders. Sanford Ambulance is grateful for the dedication and support our local firefighters provide before and during every call.

We're Hiring!!

Are you an EMT or paramedic who is interested in working in a fun, fast-paced atmosphere? Sanford Ambulance is hiring!

Check out sanfordhealth.jobs to see what positions we have available! We'd love to have you join our team!



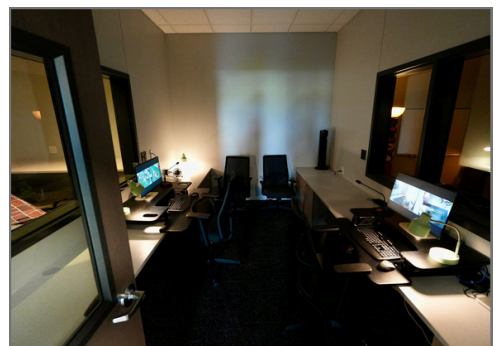
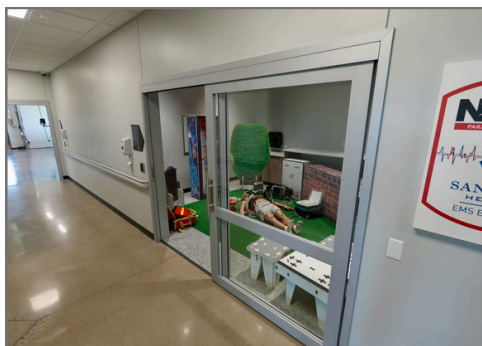
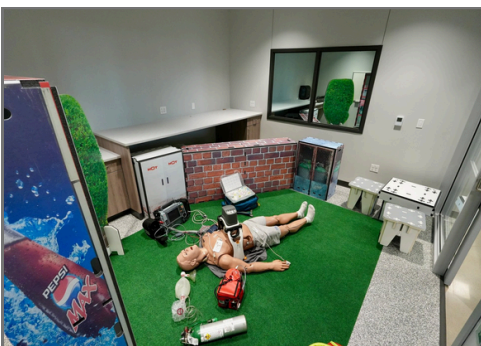
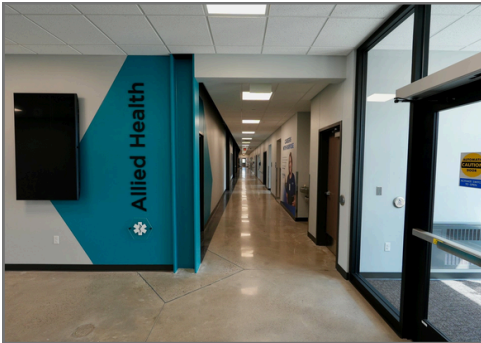
EMS Education

Sanford Health EMS Education has some BIG news!!

We're beyond excited to share that our EMR, EMT, and Paramedic programs moved to a brand-new home at the NDSCS Career Innovation Center (CIC) in Fargo! Classes started on August 25th, and we're excited to train the next generation of lifesavers in a space built for our needs.

The CIC's cutting-edge facilities at 4230 64th Avenue South are designed to elevate our hands-on training. With advanced simulation labs and flexible classrooms, our students will practice real-world emergency scenarios, honing critical skills for EMR, EMT, and Paramedic roles. This modern setup ensures our students are prepared to respond with confidence and precision in high-stakes situations.

As our education team continues to move into their new space, we'd love to have you visit! Give us a call if you're interested in continuing your EMS education at the CIC!



Sanford Ambulance

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