

Rural Michigan Highlights

- 90% of rural managers identified recruitment of new personnel or volunteers as a major or moderate challenge.
- According to Department Profile data, 28% of rural departments (fire and EMS) experienced a net loss in personnel in the last year which is up from 23% in 2019. 16% had no change in 2022. Time, lack of interest, and low pay were the top three recruitment barriers.
- 22% of rural first responders indicate they will provide services for less than five more years.
- 73% of rural departments indicated they had an assigned person for training. Of those, 77% said that the individual spent less than 5 hours a week on training.
- Top four training topics of interest for rural departments were disaster/emergency preparedness, farm safety/ag rescue, response to suicide calls, and defensive tactics.
- 82% of rural first responders in the survey indicated seeing an increase in mental health calls and 79% an increase in substance use calls.
- Less than 50% of rural first responders indicated that their training prepared them well for mental health calls and only 30% indicated feeling well prepared to respond to family or friends of a patient at a suicide call.
- 74% of rural respondents felt prepared for an opioid overdose and 54% for other substance use treatment.
- 84% of rural survey respondents were interested in at least one training related to behavioral health topics.
- 74% of rural survey respondents reported experiencing critical stress (up from 64% in 2019). 19% had thought about suicide (up from 14% in 2019).
- Of rural respondents who experienced critical stress, PTSD, or suicidal thoughts, only 50% sought help (increase from 45% in 2019).



In 2019, Rural EMS Network (MiREMS) began work on a project to assess the needs of fire and EMS agencies in northern lower peninsula of Michigan. Feedback on preliminary results and potential strategies was obtained through a variety of meetings. The Needs Assessment focused on thirty-six counties in the primarily rural northern region of the lower peninsula. The initial assessment completed in August 2020 was utilized to identify challenges and obtain FEMA assistance to address recruitment and retention challenges. A follow up assessment was conducted in 2022 to assess impact and continued need.

Department Profiles and First Responder Surveys were distributed largely by email and posting online. Some copies were distributed at meetings or through personal contact with departments. Department profiles were distributed across Michigan to capture data from rural and nonrural counties for comparison purposes.



Department profiles were completed by 380 department; 193 indicated service in a fully rural county. Of the rural departments, 24% provided fire suppression only, 45% provided fire suppression and medical first response (MFR), 13% provided both fire suppression and transport EMS, and 18% provided EMS Transport only. 81% of the rural departments reported being volunteer departments. Out of 83 counties, 82 had at least one completed profile.



Of the 441 first responders who completed the Michigan Emergency Services Survey, 235 or 53% indicated that their primary service area was in a rural county. Of the rural providers, 60% reported working in a volunteer department. Longevity with departments was high for rural respondents with 23% reporting 10-19 years of service, 30% 20-29 years of service, and 31% reporting more than 30 years of service.

Topics covered in the Department Profile and survey included recruitment and retention of personnel, training and education, emergency response related to the impact of mental health and substance use disorders, critical stress among first responders, quality assurance and improvement, and emergency dispatch.

The full report is available at www.michiefs.org/NMFCA or www.MiREMS.org. Next steps for the collaborative project include establishing regional field offices, completing an extensive marketing campaign, offering training programs that meet identified needs, and assisting departments with their recruitment and retention needs. Data from the needs assessment will guide marketing efforts and technical assistance provided by various state and regional organizations.





Michigan Rural
EMS Network

RESOURCES TO ASSIST YOUR RURAL FIRST RESPONDER AGENCY!

Michigan Rural EMS Network (MiREMS) provides programs and resources to strengthen EMS systems through innovation, education, resources, and strategic partnerships in order to improve practices and outcomes.

Resources and initiatives are developed based on input from needs assessments, surveys, and a regional advisory board. MiREMS works with partners, strategically located across Michigan, to help meet regional needs. We can share expertise and information regarding:



Assessments & Data

- Regional needs assessments
- Assistance with data for grants and planning
- White papers for rural issues



Education Resources

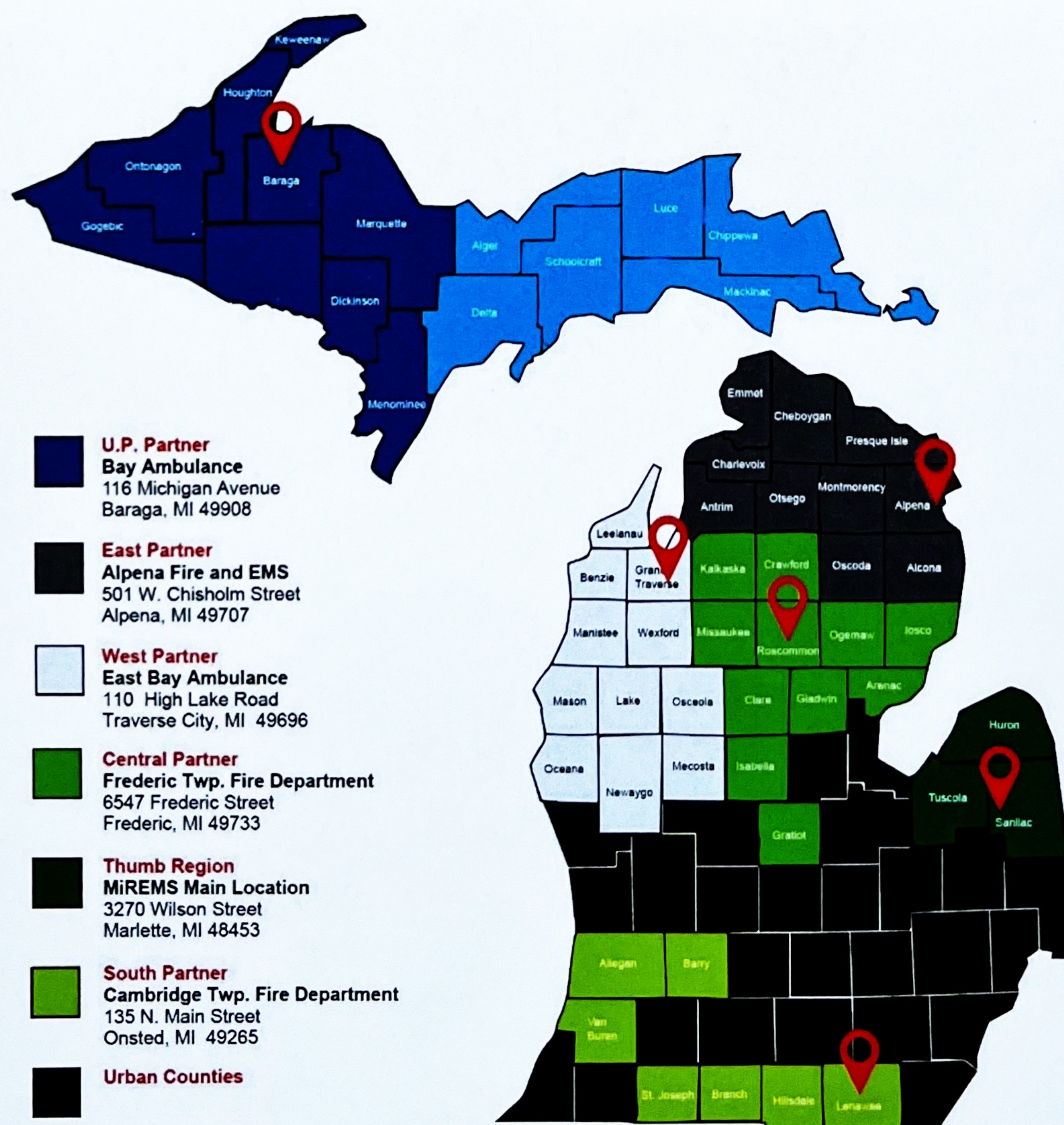
- Mobile training units via resource agencies
- Program development and coordination
- Funding for courses



Operations Support

- Recruitment and retention resources
- Management programs
- Connection and referrals to subject matter experts

RESOURCE AGENCY LOCATIONS





Michigan Rural EMS Network

Current Programs

2024

Basic Education

Funding for MFR and
EMT initial education
courses

Funding for continuing
education classes

Mental Wellness

Career Survival - in
partnership with Two
the Rescue

Stress First Aid

Curbside Manner

Creating Safe Spaces

Peer Support Training

CISM Training Funding

Specialty

Agriculture Safety

ASHER Active Shooter

Management Training

Other training
dependent upon
funding and regional
needs

High-Performance CPR

HAZMAT Training

Program support available for rural agencies or regions within Michigan