



The Annual Report: What, Why, and How

August 2024

You are a new program director, and you've heard that you have to complete an Annual Report for CoAEMSP each year, but what is it, why is it important, and what information will you need?

There are several reasons for the annual reporting requirement. The most important is the opportunity to assess your program from the perspective of different metrics commonly used in education. Preparing the report and gathering the data allows the program to reflect on how effective they are at retaining students once enrolled and the ability of graduates to successfully complete a credentialing examination, thus enabling the individual to obtain a position in the profession as a Paramedic. It is also an opportunity to analyze the feedback from graduates and employers on whether both parties viewed the education provided as adequate to prepare the individual as a competent provider to enter the profession. The results can provide the program with information to make necessary changes in areas such as screening, orientation of new students, educational delivery methods, student assessment, reasons students leave the program, and other key areas. In essence, an annual report and review can serve as a 30,000-foot view for that single snapshot in time.

Beyond the value of an internal assessment, accreditors (both institutional and programmatic) require that programs establish outcome thresholds for the areas identified and are an important component of fair practices and transparency to the public. In the *CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines* for the EMS Professions, the word *outcomes* appears a dozen times, amplifying the importance of not just providing education but evaluating the results. The specific language from the *CAAHEP Standards* for EMS is:

"Outcomes assessments must include but are not limited to: national or state credentialing examination(s) performance, programmatic retention/attrition, graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction, job (positive) placement, and programmatic summative measures (i.e., final comprehensive students evaluations in all learning domains). The program must meet the outcomes assessment thresholds established by the CoAEMSP."

The timing of the CoAEMSP Annual Report provides a minimum of 16 months for the program to gather and analyze data; for example, the 2021 Annual Report will be due in May 2023. The information that the Program Director must compile, and track includes:

Retention

- Number of students enrolled in the program after 10% of the program's total clock hours have been completed
- Number of students graduating in the reporting year
- Reasons for attrition during the program: academic (dismissed due to grades, withdrew due to grades, other academic reasons); non-academic (financial, medical/personal, and other/unknown).

Credentialing

- Number of graduates who attempted the required credentialing exam
- Number who passed the examination on the initial attempt
- Number who passed on the first three attempts

Placement

- Number of graduates who were employed in a position using the Paramedic knowledge and skills obtained in the program, which can include a related field. This metric also includes individuals who volunteer, are continuing their education, or serving in the military. It does not include individuals who continue to work in an EMT or AEMT role, whatever the venue.

Graduate and Employer Surveys

- Number of graduate surveys sent, return rate, and analysis of the responses, and plan for improvement if indicated
- Number of employer surveys sent, return rate, and analysis of the responses, and plan for improvement if indicated

Results of the annual Resource Assessment completed by students, faculty, Medical Director, and Advisory Committee

Information on satellite locations, if applicable

There are also a series of general information questions that are revised annually to provide valuable information regarding the landscape of Paramedic educational programs.

A database or other tracking system should be maintained throughout the year to facilitate easy retrieval of this information and completion of the report. The copy of the submitted report should be easily accessible to program personnel and used as a reference for the following year. For example, students who should have graduated in the required reporting year but did not are included as graduates in the report the following year and are not lost as program graduates. When the information listed is maintained on an ongoing basis, the CoAEMSP Annual Report data can be completed quickly.

The CoAEMSP Annual Report is updated prior to release each year and sent directly to Program Directors. In February, webinars are provided to review the report and answer questions. The due date for the CoAEMSP Annual Report is May 15th. The staff then reviews the report and acknowledges receipt. The report is also assessed by the Board of Directors, who ultimately determine what action to recommend to CAAHEP.

The outcomes thresholds for retention, credentialing, and placement have been established at 70%, comparable to other health science accreditors. Programs that do not meet a threshold should evaluate their program and processes to determine if there are corrective measures or changes that will address the issue. CoAEMSP tracks programs that consistently fall below a specific threshold and will initiate a conversation with the program. No action is taken until the program fails to meet a specific threshold each year for three (3) consecutive years. However, the CoAEMSP Board of Directors is sensitive to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, including related delays, campus closures, and other impediments, and consideration will be given during that recovery period.

It is also important to note that the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), the organization that recognizes and accredits CAAHEP, requires that all programs must publish their latest annual outcomes results for the credentialing examination, retention, and positive placement on the Paramedic educational program's homepage of their website.

Protection of the public is a primary mission of accreditation and transparency of a program's success, as identified by outcomes, and is important information for prospective students.

Establishing and requiring specific outcome measures for education programs is similar to establishing a cut score on high-stakes and final evaluations for our EMS students. We establish what success looks like for our students, and isn't it reasonable for education programs to be held to a success measure as well? We believe you'll agree that program outcomes in these three areas are integral to ensuring the public that students have the greatest opportunity to attain a successful career as an EMS professional.