

## Updated Statement Regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

*March 16, 2020*

Our hearts at the CoAEMSP go out to everyone impacted by COVID-19 (coronavirus). As both higher education professionals and healthcare professionals, we know you have been consumed with addressing the many challenges the virus is causing in your communities.

The CoAEMSP has been closely monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on Paramedic education programs and their institutions. It is recognized that institutions are preparing or enacting action plans to keep students, faculty, and staff safe; that programs are considering alternative methods for delivery of didactic courses; and that clinical and capstone field sites are enacting plans and processes that might impact clinical and capstone field education.

As institutions make decisions to alter the delivery of the Paramedic curriculum, whether this includes a temporary closure of an institution or a move to alternative delivery of didactic coursework, such decisions should be made with guidance from school administration and institutional accreditors, and with regard to student enrollment policies, and local and state public health agencies' directives.

There are a variety of scenarios resulting from COVID-19 that may lead to a delay in the normal program completion time for students, including students and faculty being ill or quarantined, difficulty finding appropriate clinical sites, and institutions temporarily closing. There are also significant ethical and legal considerations around changes in students' learning experiences. Decisions about requiring students to participate in specific clinical rotations and capstone field internship and/or extending time to graduation are both programmatic and institutional. Programs are, therefore, encouraged to have all program changes reviewed by the institution's academic/instructional leaders.

Closure of institutions would negate the possibility of simulation as a strategy for the foreseeable future as both students and faculty would be unable to attend in person.

Programs must be aware that simulation cannot be substituted for capstone field internship. This is not unique to Paramedic education programs, as many programmatic accreditors in the healthcare professions are not permitting simulation for clinical (their equivalent to the Paramedic capstone field internship) education.

We have put forth several suggested resources (below) to consult when making these decisions. Specifically, in regard to temporary closures or moving courses to a distance education delivery, the CoAEMSP has found the announcement made by the U.S. Department of Education "[Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)" to offer possible solutions. As a result, the CoAEMSP will follow the guidelines in this announcement and allow programs to offer didactic coursework via distance education modalities without formally notifying the CoAEMSP during this unusual public health circumstance. Programs wishing to continue distance education delivery after the COVID-19 crisis will need to follow the CoAEMSP's policy and formally notify the CoAEMSP of the substantive change.

Because the health and safety of our volunteers, educators, and students is our top priority, the CoAEMSP has

- postponed all on-site evaluations scheduled through April 30, 2020;
- suspended the coordination of future site visits until further notice;
- extended the deadline for Annual Reports to June 30, 2020;
- extended the deadline for all Self-Study Reports due April 1, May 1, or June 1 **until July 1**; and
- waived late fees for unpaid accounts as of March 15, 2020.

March 16, 2020

Although the situation regarding the COVID-19 is unpredictable and unprecedented, the one constant is that we want to do the right thing by our volunteers, our programs, and our students. The need to protect our communities is essential especially at this critical time to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Suggested resources for the latest information on COVID-19:

- [WHO](#)
- [CDC](#)
- [NHTSA's Office of EMS](#)
- [US Department of Education](#)
- [Federal Student Aid](#)
- your local public health authority for your county and state
- your local and state regulatory institutions including the State OEMS

We are all in this together and recognize that the health of our nation depends on how all of us respond. To that end, the CoAEMSP is committed to working with each of our programs to ensure that students receive the required education per the Paramedic curricula and CAAHEP *Standards*.