



Site Visitor Manual

May 2024

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Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs
for the Emergency Medical Services Professions

Our Mission

The mission of the CoAEMSP is to advance the quality of EMS education through accreditation.

Our Vision

CoAEMSP is recognized as the leader in evidence-based standards for accreditation.



Expand accreditation services with the implementation of voluntary AEMT accreditation



Provide accreditation services for paramedic educational programs globally, taking deliberate action to market our services to an international audience.



Develop an overarching data management strategy that results in efficiency and value for staff and constituents.

2023-25 Strategic Plan



Launch communications program that promotes and strengthens relationships through a variety of targeted interfaces



Develop resources and programs to support (new) program directors with the accreditation process.

CoAEMSP Strategic Plan updated: January 2023

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Site visitors are

supportive

consultative

nurturing

I. INTRODUCTION

The site visit is the most critical and complex aspect of the accreditation process. From the education program's perspective, it is also the most visible function of the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP). The CoAEMSP is responsible for assuring that those engaged in the site visit are qualified and competent.

The Site Visit Team must accurately and reliably collect, review, interpret, verify, and document all information about the education program. The accreditation recommendation made by the CoAEMSP to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) depends upon the information gathered. Unless this information is accurate and fully documented, the CoAEMSP will find it difficult to reach a fair and objective decision concerning the education program.

Since the accreditation process can be influenced by the performance of the Site Visit Team, the policies and procedures have been developed to ensure consistency and fairness. CoAEMSP expects that delineating the responsibilities and skills of site visitors will assist those already engaged in discharging their responsibilities and will provide the basis for educating new site visitors. Careful preparation and continuous improvement of the site visit process and performance will increase the precision and consistency of the CAAHEP accreditation process.

The notations to the *CAAHEP Standards* identified throughout these Policies and Procedures refer to the current *CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in the Emergency Medical Services Professions*.

Question about a site visit?

Contact [Jennifer](#) via phone or email

Emergency arises en route to or during a site visit? Contact [Jennifer](#)

II. SITE VISITOR QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

Site visitors are instrumental in the peer review process.

Site visitors include paramedic educators and physicians. Individuals who volunteer their time and talent as site visitors undergo a rigorous application and onboarding process. Site visitors must remain current with the policies and practices of CoAEMSP and CAAHEP. Before conducting the first site visit, the site visitor has completed and submitted an application, which includes essay questions, a current curriculum vitae and two letters of recommendation, a letter of support from their employer, and successfully completing the site visitor workshop.

Applications are reviewed by a selection committee comprised of CoAEMSP board members and staff, which then recommends appointment to the CoAEMSP Board of Directors. The CoAEMSP Board makes the final decision on the appointment of site visitors.

Qualifications

Site visitors are paramedic educators or physicians; a generalist site visitor may be added to the Site Visit Team as a third member.

All Site Visitors

1. Successful completion of the Site Visitor Workshop.
2. If with a CAAHEP-accredited Paramedic educational program, the program must be in good standing.*¹

Paramedic Educator

1. Employed as an educator in a CAAHEP accredited Paramedic educational program, at least 30% employee to the program or if retired and not currently working in a CAAHEP accredited Paramedic educational program, has worked in EMS education within the past 5 years.
2. At least 2 years of full-time experience or 5 years of part-time experience as a Paramedic educator in a CAAHEP accredited Paramedic educational program.
3. Knowledgeable about education issues, especially curriculum, exam development, program evaluation, and student evaluation.
4. Minimum of a Bachelor's degree.
5. Qualify as a program director under the current CAAHEP *Standards*.

¹ *Good standing is defined as a program holding active status as a CoAEMSP Letter of Review program (LoR) or active initial or continuing CAAHEP accreditation. A program director, medical director, or faculty from a suspended or revoked LoR program, or a program holding CAAHEP probationary accreditation for any reason in the past 3 years would not be in good standing.

Physician

1. Actively involved in a Paramedic educational program.
2. Knowledgeable about education issues.
3. Qualify as a medical director under the current CAAHEP *Standards*.
4. If retired and not currently working in a CAAHEP-accredited Paramedic educational program, has worked in EMS education within the past 5 years.

To **maintain** the status of an active CoAEMSP Site Visitor, **all** are required to:

- Successfully complete any required Site Visitor Updates.
- Have consistently acceptable quality assurance reports as determined by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors.
- Attend any required CE sessions provided by the CoAEMSP (web-based, in-person, or other format) to ensure continuous compliance with CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*.
- Participate in a minimum of 4 site visits in a 24-month period.
- If retired and not currently working in a CAAHEP-accredited Paramedic educational program, has worked in EMS education within the past 5 years.
- If with a CAAHEP-accredited Paramedic educational program, the program must be in good standing.

In addition to meeting the above requirements, all site visitors must:

1. Attend the quarterly Conversations with Site Visitors (web-based).
2. Consistently achieve acceptable quality assurance reports.
3. Participate in a minimum of 4 site visits in a 24-month period.
4. If retired and not currently working in a CAAHEP-accredited paramedic program, has worked in EMS education within the past five (5) years.

All requirements are subject to the discretion of the CoAEMSP Board of Directors.

Knowledge, Skills, and Sensitivities

The list below describes the general competencies expected of site visitors. No single site visitor can be proficient in all the areas described; however, they should strive to do so. The team approach utilized by the CoAEMSP assumes a complementary integration of the site visitor's knowledge and skills so that the team exhibits the required competencies.

Site visitors representing the CoAEMSP must exhibit in-depth knowledge of the:

- The full scope of the education program's resources, operations, and components as described in the program's self-study report prepared by the sponsor requesting the visit and the additional site visit documents uploaded to ShareFile.

- CAAHEP *Standards* and the CoAEMSP's *Interpretations of the CAAHEP Standards* applicable to the education program being evaluated. **The CAAHEP *Standards* are the basis for the accreditation process and must *always* be at the forefront. Programs are assessed *based on the CAAHEP Standards*.**

The companion document, the CoAEMSP *Interpretations*, contains excerpts of the CAAHEP *Standards* with CoAEMSP interpretations adopted by CoAEMSP through policies. The *Interpretations* are **not** part of the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* document and are subject to change by CoAEMSP. Revisions may occur often, so this document should be reviewed frequently to ensure the most current version. The *Interpretations* are updated at least annually. Refer to <http://www.coaemsp.org/> for the CAAHEP *Standards* and the current interpretations.

Questions regarding the *Interpretations* can be directed to the CoAEMSP.

- Existing procedures for accreditation, including due process.

The list below describes essential attributes and sensitivities that the CoAEMSP Board of Directors believes to be essential qualities in a successful site visitor. Site visitors must have sensitivity to the following:

- Concerns of those with an investment in the visitation process, including, but not limited to:
 - Privacy
 - Confidentiality of data
- Politics of visit and accreditation, including but not limited to:
 - Internal and external ramifications of adverse findings or decisions
 - Potential institutional or programmatic misuse of the accreditation process
 - Sensitivity to the facilitative and consultative role expected from site visitors.
- Limitations of the responsibility and authority of site visitors
- Values and philosophies differ from those of the site visitor.
- Potential for personal or professional bias

Training

Site visitors are required to actively participate in the CoAEMSP Site Visitor Workshop. After the initial training, site visitors must complete periodic CoAEMSP updates to stay current with *Standards*, interpretations, policies, and EMS education.

Appointment

Upon approval by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors, a new site visitor will be paired with an experienced site visitor.

The site visitor remains active as long as the person meets the requirements.

Reappointment Following Absence

Individuals who have not met the site visit participation requirement but would like to be re-appointed must submit a letter to the CoAEMSP requesting consideration of reappointment. The letter must include an updated curriculum vitae and an explanation of what has changed to allow time for visits.

Withdrawal of Appointment

Individuals may be removed from the roster of active site visitors if any of the following occurs:

- Voluntary resignation
- Failure to participate in a minimum of 4 site visits in a 24-month period.
- Conduct detrimental to or unbecoming of the CAAHEP accreditation process and the CoAEMSP.

The above is not a complete list of all the potential reasons a site visitor may have their appointment withdrawn. The CoAEMSP Board of Directors has the final decision as to what warrants the withdrawal of the appointment.

Biennial Review of Status policy

(revised by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

Site visitor status is subject to review biennially by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors and is based upon recommendations by the Site Visit & Visitor Committee, or its successor. Reappointment recommendations will be based upon both the activity of the site visitor during the prior year(s) and assessment of the quality of their site visitor performance. Review and reappointment will occur at a Board of Directors meeting in the even numbered years.

III. SITE VISIT TEAM COMPOSITION

A Site Visit Team comprises at least two people.

Site visit teams consist of a minimum of two site visitors selected by the CoAEMSP staff from a list of site visitors appointed and approved by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors.

Assignment Criteria

The Site Visit Team will be selected based on site visitor availability and experience level. An inexperienced site visitor will always partner with an experienced site visitor.

1. No site visitor should have any real or perceived conflict of interest with the education program, faculty, or other assigned site visitor. If the assigned site visitor, the executive director, or the education program believes a conflict of interest may exist, the site visitor will be excused, and another site visitor will be selected.
2. Site visitors will not be assigned to education programs in the same state where the site visitor resides or works or to education programs where professional relationships have been developed, or there is a close personal relationship with any program staff and a site visitor. Additionally, site visitors are not be assigned to locations that are geographically close to the program, even if they are in different states.
3. All site visitors are required to acknowledge the Confidentiality Agreement. (The link to the confidentiality agreement is included in the site visit confirmation email from the CoAEMSP before every site visit.) This is a reminder of the importance of the confidential nature of the site visit. **Confidentiality is paramount to the accreditation process.**

Team Captain

The team member having the most site visit experience is typically designated as the Team Captain (TC). The Team Captain is responsible for:

- working with the program director to make a schedule for the visit
- communicating the Site Visit Team's findings to the program
- completing and submitting the Site Visit Report

Observers

Observers, including new site visitors, state EMS officials, CoAEMSP board members or staff, may accompany the Site Visit Team. State EMS officials are encouraged to observe the site visit.

Number of Site Visitors and Length of a Site Visit policy:

(adopted by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

A regular site visit is comprised of two appointed site visitors for two (2) days. On a case-by-case basis, CoAEMSP determines if there are special circumstances that require more than two site visitors and/or more than two days. Special circumstances include, and are not limited to, programs with one (1) or more satellite campuses, distance between satellite campuses, or online/distance learning.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities begin when a site visitor accepts the assignment and end when CAAHEP awards the program the final accreditation status.

The CoAEMSP, the site visitors, and the program coordinate the site visit. The responsibilities described below are listed in which they are chronologically discharged before, during, and after the site visit.

Purpose of the Site Visit and the Site Visit Team

The accreditation process has multiple steps, and the site visit is an essential part of that process. However, until CAAHEP takes the final accreditation action, no single part of the process, including the site visit, determines the program's compliance with the CAAHEP Standards or its accreditation status.

After the site visit is complete and the program has had an opportunity to respond to the site visit findings, the CoAEMSP Board will determine whether the potential *Standards* violations evaluated during the site visit constitute deficiencies within the program. The CoAEMSP Board will then recommend to CAAHEP based on all program materials, responses, the site visit findings, and remediation by the program. This also means that unbiased observation of the program by the Site Visit Team, those individuals who see the program, is critical.

Site Visitor Checklist:

Visit www.coaemsp.org for the current Site Visitor Checklist.

Before the Site Visit

The CoAEMSP will match available site visitors with the program's site visit dates. Upon being selected for a site visit, the team members will confirm with the CoAEMSP their willingness to participate.

A site visitor with a real or perceived conflict of interest with the education program must inform the CoAEMSP and disqualify themselves immediately. The CoAEMSP reserves the right to disqualify a site visitor based on a real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest. Before each site visit, the site visitor must acknowledge the Confidentiality Agreement sent before the site visit.

The CoAEMSP should be notified as soon as possible if any emergency conflicts arise for the site visitors after the assignment to a site visit and before the scheduled visit. Additionally, emergency contact information for the site visitors should be provided to the CoAEMSP in case it is necessary to make contact while they are on a site visit.

Site Visitor Conflict of Interest policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2013) states:

Site visitors should not be assigned to education programs in the same state where the site visitor resides or works or to education programs where professional relationships have been developed. Additionally, site visitors must not be assigned to locations that are geographically close to the program, even if they are in different states.

Conflict of Interest from a Program Sponsor toward a site visitor

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

The CoAEMSP provides the program sponsor with the opportunity to review members of the proposed team to identify any conflicts of interest that would make service by any member of the team inappropriate.

If the program sponsor believes that one or more of the members of the proposed team has a conflict of interest and would not be able to serve as an unbiased member of the team, the program director must notify the CoAEMSP immediately. The following conflicts of interest may include but are not limited to:

- Employed or living in the same geographic region
- Previous employee or appointee of program or sponsor
- A graduate of the program
- Been involved with publicly expressed opinions bearing on accreditation of program
- Previous employee or appointee of a clinical or field affiliate site
- Has a relative associated with the program or sponsor
- Is or has been a paid or unpaid consultant to the program

Upon disclosure of a possible conflict of interest, the CoAEMSP will make the final determination.

Self-Study Report

Upon receipt of the program's Self-Study Report and the Executive Analysis, the Site Visit Team members review the documents in relation to the CAAHEP *Standards*.

1. The Site Visit Team Captain must communicate with the Program Director regarding any questions on the SSR and supplementary materials the program must make available before the site visit via the CoAEMSP-designated fileshare.

2. Following the review of the Self-Study Report and the Executive Analysis, the Site Visit Team members should communicate with each other to identify concerns, outline specific areas for scrutiny, and develop data collection and evaluation strategies.
3. Site Visit Team member(s) should communicate with the CoAEMSP regarding any questions or concerns not clarified in (1) or (2) above.

For more tips on assisting site visitors in preparing for and completing a successful site visit, check out the **Site Visitor Quick Reference Guide**, available at www.coaemsp.org > Site Visits.

Travel

Airline travel arrangements and hotel accommodations are made via the online booking tool or by contacting the CoAEMSP-designated travel agency. When possible, coordinate the travel arrangements of the Site Visit Team members.

For information to contact the travel agent, please visit www.coaemsp.org > Site Visits.

Discuss potential travel arrangements with the Program during the initial call with the program and before making reservations.

The airfare is directly billed to CoAEMSP. You will pay for the hotel, then an expense report for reimbursement.

Each site visitor will receive a per diem via ACH direct deposit in advance of the site visit for food and incidentals. A portion of the per diem check is considered income based on the destination city's per diem rate. A 1099 is issued when an individual's collective income reaches the IRS threshold. (It is the responsibility of the individual to claim the income on their income taxes.)

The site visitor must submit an expense report for travel-related expenses within 14 days of the site visit. CoAEMSP will reimburse within 14 days of receiving the expense report.

Site Visit Team members are responsible for confirming the ground transportation with the Program Director. Inquire if the program can provide airport and local transportation. If that is not possible due to distances, request approval to rent a car.

All modes of transportation to and from the host city airport and lodging accommodations must be coordinated with the CoAEMSP-designated travel agency to ensure compliance with the policies of the CoAEMSP.

Agenda

The Program Director arranges the site visit agenda in collaboration with the Site Visit Team Captain. The Program Director will use the sample agenda on www.coaemsp.org. The agenda should be modified when necessary to ensure that the relevant parties can be interviewed and pertinent data can be collected and verified. The Team Captain is responsible for the final approval of the agenda.

The agenda will always begin with a meeting with the Program Director, followed by the general group session. The agenda will always end with an informal meeting with the Program Director, followed by the closing summation with the administration and program personnel. The order of the other activities will vary based on the availability of students, graduates, employers, faculty, and preceptors.

Key elements to scheduling the site visit include:

- **Meeting with the Program Director** to review the site visit schedule and make any adjustments.
- **Hosting the Opening Session** to inform the administration and program personnel about the purpose of the site visit, function, and mechanics, including timelines and its relationship to the accreditation processes of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP.
- **Interviewing students and reviewing any additional student records and program files** on Day 1 that were not uploaded to the CoAEMSP-designated fileshare. Information collected during these formal activities often provides additional information to support the other site visit activities.

Everything in between may be arranged as necessary:

- Interviewing graduates, employers, Medical Director, faculty, Advisory Committee members
- Reviewing student records and program files that were not uploaded to the fileshare
- Virtual visits with clinical and field preceptors

The site visit will conclude with the following:

- **Meeting informally with the Program Director**, which may include the Dean.
- **Providing a Closing Summation** with the administration and program personnel.

Withdrawing from a Site Visit

A site visitor who withdraws from a scheduled site visit is responsible for expenses incurred before the withdrawal unless documentation of an emergency is provided. An emergency is defined as:

- Personal or family illness or injury
- Death of an immediate family member
- Military assignment
- Jury duty
- Natural disaster

Preliminary Team Meeting

The site visitors should meet with each other before the start of the site visit. At this meeting, the Site Visit Team reviews concerns arising from the Self-Study Report, the Executive Analysis, and the agenda and finalizes the evaluative strategies. This meeting may be virtual or in-person, depending on the visit format, and can occur the evening before the site visit.

During the Site Visit

Interview questions are the foundation of the site visit. Correctly phrasing the question will elicit more information and accurate information. All interviews should be approached as a conversation and not an interrogation.

The site visit is a dynamic and flexible process adapted to the type and size of the program reviewed and the completeness and clarity of the Self-Study Report. A list of suggested questions has been developed for each group or individual the Site Visit Team meets with. The questions serve as conversation starters and topics to pursue; they are not meant to be asked verbatim. There is no correct or set order to the questions, nor is the list exhaustive. Some avenues may require more extensive investigation if deficiencies are suspected. The same questions are asked of several groups to verify the information and perceptions. For a complete list of questions and key talking points, visit www.coaemsp.org > Site Visits.

Using open-ended questions are encouraged, focusing less on one-word answers. Open-ended questions can produce facilitative responses and reduce the need for additional questions. Direct questions are appropriate, too, when the need is immediate information, or the interviewee is rambling or being vague. Avoid "why" questions; this often puts the interviewee on the spot.

Avoid relaying to the Program the perception that you are 'checking the boxes.' The Site Visit Report is important, but the site visit should be a conversation to learn about the Program and assess its compliance with the accreditation standards.

Initial Meeting with the Program Director

Fears or anxieties should be allayed, and no promises made regarding accreditation decisions. Site Visit Team members should remind the Program Director that the Site Visit Team is only gathering information and does not influence or make final accreditation recommendations.

This meeting is an excellent opportunity to hear candid remarks from the Program Director, updates, and any program changes that may have occurred since the Self-Study Report was initially submitted.

Opening Session with Program Officials

This session should include as many individuals as possible involved in the program, including administration, faculty, staff, and the medical director. Some of the following information will be a review for those closely involved with the process, but it is vital to lay the appropriate groundwork.

1. Introduce the site visitors. Include names and titles. Backgrounds should include the role in EMS education, EMS systems, and emergency medical care. Keep this brief, less than a minute per person.
2. Identify that you represent the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP.
3. Define the purpose of your visit – to verify and clarify information relevant to the program. Emphasize that the program will be evaluated based on the CAAHEP *Standards*. *You are not there to tell the program how you do it.* Their program is not evaluated against your program. Make that clear.
4. State that all information you gather, not otherwise public, will remain confidential.
5. Emphasize that the Site Visit Team does not recommend accreditation. The team is responsible for gathering information.
6. Clarify that you are reviewing only the Paramedic program – not the EMT or Advanced EMT program.
7. Discuss that to obtain an accurate reflection of the program, you need to meet with students, graduates, Advisory Committee members, employers, and clinical and field preceptors without the Program Director or other sponsor or program personnel and faculty present.
8. Emphasize that the process is to gather information and to be supportive and consultative. The CAAHEP *Standards* provide minimum requirements.
9. The opening and closing scripts and the Conversation Starters are available on www.coaemsp.org.

Data Collection/Interpretation

The Site Visit Team members should solicit, collect, verify, and interpret the information made available by the education program through interviews with faculty, preceptors, employers, advisory committee members, and administration. The role of the Site Visit Team is to report on the education program's degree of compliance with the CAAHEP *Standards* by:

- Inspecting the pertinent facilities and resources.
- Reviewing and analyzing appropriate documentation and reports.
- Interviewing key program personnel, medical director(s), support staff, students, graduates, preceptors, and representatives from the Advisory Committee.

Documentation & the Site Visit Report

The Site Visit Team must carefully document all findings in the Site Visit Report, which is a communication to the CoAEMSP Board of Directors and CoAEMSP detailing the findings of the site visit.

Some questions appear to relate to one another and ask for a different answer. Do not comment by writing “see above” or refer to a previously answered question. Even if you must repeat part of an answer, it provides a better understanding for the CoAEMSP Board and the program staff who will read the report.

- Evidence must be provided to substantiate all potential *Standards* violations or program weaknesses. For example, if the standard in question is identified as the medical director does not “assure the competence of each graduate...”, substantiation may consist of a reference to statements made by the students or staff, to the admission of non-participation by the physician(s) concerned, or the absence of any documentation signed by the medical director attesting to the competence of each student.
- All standards marked as “Not Met” must have a rationale for why and how the site team determined that there was a potential standards violation. Consider what evidence the program needs or can produce to satisfy the standard in the Program’s Response to the Site Visit Findings Letter.
- All questions in the Executive Analysis must be addressed and answered in the Site Visit Report.

The Site Visit Report is used to prepare the Site Visit Findings Letter, which is reviewed by the CoAEMSP Board when formulating its recommendation to CAAHEP. Additional information that would provide a better snapshot of the program is encouraged.

Editorials regarding your thoughts and feelings about the Program are not allowed and may lead to problems when the CoAEMSP reviews the findings and forwards its recommendation to CAAHEP. You must refrain from including personal biases and references to your program while conducting the site visit.

Closing Summation

This session includes those individuals invited by the program and may include administration, faculty, staff, and the Medical Director. Provide an oral summary of the Site Visit Team’s assessment of the program’s strengths, potential Standards violations, and suggestions for improvement.

1. Read the required verbatim disclaimer for the exit summation.
2. Reemphasize
 - The Site Visit Team maintains confidentiality of the information associated with the site visit not otherwise public.
 - The Program will receive a written report in the form of a Findings Letter and an official copy of the Site Visit Report from the CoAEMSP

- The Program has been reviewed based on the CAAHEP *Standards*
 - The Site Visit Team does not recommend an accreditation status.
 - The Program will receive official notification of CAAHEP's decision. CAAHEP posts the award letter on its website, www.caahep.org.
 - Review the timeline dates included in the original confirmation of the site visit email.
3. The Program will receive an online evaluation form from CoAEMSP to assess the Site Visit Team and CoAEMSP.
 4. Present strengths
 5. Present potential Standards violations
 6. Present other recommendations

Do not leave anything with the program.

Under no circumstances is the Site Visit Team to indicate their personal views or predict programmatic results, CoAEMSP recommendations, or CAAHEP actions.

After the Site Visit

After the site visit, the site visitors are required to:

1. Email the Site Visit Report within one week of the conclusion of the site visit.
2. Submit the CoAEMSP Expense Report with all receipts within two weeks of the site visit directly to CoAEMSP's CPA firm. (The expense report includes the email to send the report and receipts to; the expense report is available at www.coaemsp.org.) **The CoAEMSP will not reimburse expenses incurred by a site visitor if the expense report is submitted more than 30 days after the site visit.**

Expenses: What is reimbursable, and what is covered by the per diem?

per diem → meals & incidentals (Internet, sundries)

Reimbursable – submit on Expense Report

- lodging
- car rental
- mileage to home airport
- airport parking

3. If there are concerns about a site visitor's performance, communicate directly with the CoAEMSP executive director or CoAEMSP key staff person.
4. Report to the CoAEMSP any impropriety or unusual circumstance that could affect the validity of the visit.
5. Submit the names of the program director or medical director to the CoAEMSP if you recommend either as a potential site visitor.
6. Complete the online Peer Evaluation. (The link is provided to you following the site visit.)

Findings Letter

Upon receipt of the Site Visit Report, the CoAEMSP will prepare the Site Visit Findings Letter. The Findings Letter reflects the strengths, potential CAAHEP *Standards* violations, and recommendations of the Site Visit Team. It is the basis for the program to confirm the factual accuracy of the report or to allege specific factual errors at the time of the site visit.

A draft of the Findings Letter will be provided to the Site Visit Team for review and comment before it is emailed to the program. The Site Visit Team will be given a date to review the draft and respond to it. After the Site Visit Team and the CoAEMSP staff are in alignment with the Findings Letter, the letter is emailed to the Program and becomes part of the official record of the Program, along with the Self-Study Report, the Executive Analysis, the Site Visit Report, and the Program's Response to the Site Visit Findings Letter.

Remember to

- Read the EA just like you read the SSR preparing for the site visit.
- Explain all "Not Met"
- Respond to the questions from the Executive Analysis
- State why the program does not meet a standard
- Email CoAEMSP the Site Visit Report within 1 week of the site visit

Destruction of Materials policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2015) states:

Once there has been a final determination of the findings letter, the site team members and any other site visit participants who received materials from the CoAEMSP shall destroy all materials and communications related to that site visit, such as all documents received prior to the site visit, any emails pertaining to the visit, the unofficial and official team reports, and notes taken during the site visit. Destruction of materials requires deleting all electronic files and shredding any paper documents received.

V. PROFESSIONALISM

Site visitors are the representatives of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP; therefore, the behavior of the Site Visit Team directly reflects the professional and ethical expectations held by the accrediting organizations they represent. Although behavioral concerns arise infrequently, this issue has provided cause for questioning the accountability and credibility of accreditation. Careful adherence to the following principles of behavior should minimize such occurrences and strengthen the educational community's confidence in the accreditation process. As in evaluating any educational program, appropriate affective behavior is paramount to the practitioner. In your representation of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP, the appropriateness of the affective behavior you portray is equally essential.

Dress Code

CoAEMSP's objective in **establishing a formal work dress code is to enable our volunteers to project a professional image that is in keeping with the needs of our educational programs to trust us.** Site visitors need to project the image of a trustworthy, knowledgeable professional for the programs that seek accreditation and our consultative and supportive services. Jeans and sneakers are not appropriate attire. **Dress in business attire.**

Affective Domain²

There are a few cardinal rules for site visitors:

- **Do not tell them how you do it.** They don't care. Moreover, you give the impression that you are evaluating their program against yours. You cannot do that.
- **Inspect all the required areas;** cover all the CAAHEP *Standards!* The process has no credibility if you indicate that something is in substantial compliance and has never been reviewed. The schedule leaves enough time to cover all areas.
- **Explain that you would like to meet with students, graduates, Advisory Committee members, and preceptors without program faculty or sponsor representatives present.** You need candid information.
- **If a deficiency is suspected,** verify it to your satisfaction. Be thorough.
- **Don't inflict your pet EMS peeve on the Program.** Just because you feel that a good Paramedic education program must have "X" does not mean the program must have "X" if it is not an accreditation standard.
- **Resist the temptation to tell them how to do it.** General suggestions and ideas on accomplishing something may be appropriate to a point. However, advice tends to get confused with deficiencies, i.e., "We didn't pass because we didn't do it the way they said."

² The behavioral concerns are adapted from "A Decalogue for the Accreditation Team," Hector Lee (COPA Agenda, February 5, 1976) and "Guidelines for CoAEMSP Site Visitors" Patricia Tritt, RN, MA (CoAEMSP, May 2002)

- **Be honest.** The final report should not contain surprises. The contents of the site visit report should be discussed at the exit summation.
- **Read the Self-Study Report & supplemental documentation.** The process lacks credibility if the site visitors are unfamiliar with the materials. The Program has put great effort into preparing the Self-Study Report. Be familiar with it.
- **Conflicts of interest must be avoided.** Site visitors must decline any assignment in which a real or potential conflict of interest may be perceived. Conflicts of interest include assignments to programs in which former associates, former students, or relatives are employed or institutions where the site visitor has been employed or has a competitive relationship. Site visitors will not be assigned to programs in the same state where the site visitor resides or works or to programs where professional relationships have been developed.

Site visitors should immediately disqualify themselves if they have previously served as consultants to the program or the sponsor at any time. A conflict of interest may also arise when an apparent disparity in the values, philosophies, or orientations of the program and the site visitor would make an objective evaluation difficult or impossible.

- **Confidentiality must be maintained.** The accreditation process is credible only to the extent that site visitors recognize, respect, and maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained during the visitation process that is not otherwise public.
- **Undue influence (or its appearance) must be avoided.** Site visitors should not accept favors, services, gifts, or gratuities from the sponsor or program. When hospitality is offered for the convenience of the Site Visit Team, good judgment and common sense should determine its limits.
- **Imposition of values, philosophies, or methods must be avoided.** Judgment of education program quality and suggestions for improvement must be based upon the CAAHEP *Standards*. Site visitors must not impose personal preferences or ideals upon program personnel or suggest that an institution adopt measures likely to be altered or reversed by subsequent CoAEMSP Board action.
- **Avoid becoming an informer.** Site visitors often uncover what they believe to be hidden tensions or conflicts between the parties with a vested interest in the program's operations or reputation. Inappropriately alerting education program personnel, State EMS Officials, or administrative officials of suspected impropriety or potential conflicts may be perceived as a provocation and must be avoided.

- **Do not allow reputation to influence judgments.** Site visitors in awe of a program's reputation or its personnel may be reluctant to criticize apparent deficiencies. Overlooking such weaknesses is inappropriate and may give the institution a false impression concerning the quality of its program and minimize easily fixed but real problems.
- **Avoid unwarranted optimism or sentimental generosity.** Do not be tempted to minimize programmatic deficiencies when the program does its best to meet the CAAHEP *Standards*.

Failure to acknowledge and report all deficiencies can mislead program officials, jeopardize students' rights to quality education, and ultimately call into question the credibility of the accreditation process.

- **Responsibility and authority should not be abused.** Site visitors may find a marginal program vulnerable. Do not misuse the power of the accreditation process to destroy a program that may only need help.
- **Dwelling on trivial concerns is counterproductive.** Site visitors often discover small problems that can be solved by paying attention to minor details. Avoid blowing such trivial concerns out of proportion. Often, simple verbal consultation or discussion is all that is needed to correct these problems.
- **Recruitment of program personnel is inappropriate.** Site visitors often find personnel they would like to recruit for their institutions. Never take advantage of your position as a site visitor to lure good faculty members away from the program.
- **Avoid solicitation.** Site visitors might see the opportunity to suggest themselves for consultation, a temporary job, or a permanent position with the institution or program they are visiting. The CoAEMSP disapproves of soliciting site visitors to be employed by the program nor for site visitors to use the site visit as a means of job hunting.

Site Visitor Consulting policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2012) states:

Consultation by non-board member site visitors - either paid or unpaid - is not specifically prohibited by the CoAEMSP. The practice of consulting is at the sole discretion of the individual doing the consultation and is considered outside of the CoAEMSP/CAAHEP accreditation process. Site Visitors cannot visit the program as CoAEMSP representatives which they have consulted at any time. Consultation with programs that he or she has visited as a site visitor is also prohibited. Site visitors may not use their role as a CoAEMSP/CAAHEP site visitor to promote themselves.

Site Visitor Gift Policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2014) states:

Site visitors can graciously accept program gifts up to a monetary value of approximately \$25. Gifts that appear to be over \$25 should be graciously returned to the program with apologies concerning CoAEMSP site visitor policies.

VI. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Quality improvement is critical to the success of the accreditation process. Site visitors are evaluated by their team members, themselves, the Program Director, the Dean, and the CoAEMSP.

The CoAEMSP Board believes that improvement in the quality and consistency of site visits for accreditation is contingent upon the continued development of the site visitor competencies described herein. The CoAEMSP believes that such development depends on the objective evaluation of the performance and behavior exhibited by its site visitors as they perform their important responsibilities. Only by employing an evaluation system can the CoAEMSP Board discern strengths and limitations in the site visit process and provide the educational community it serves with the assurance of its responsiveness and accountability.

For these reasons, the CoAEMSP Board of Directors has established the following processes regarding site visit assessment:

Components of Evaluation

Evaluation by Program Staff

Following the site visit, the CoAEMSP asks the Program Director and the Dean, or equivalent, to complete an evaluation using an objective rating scale assessing the site visitors' knowledge, skills, sensitivities, and behavior (as described herein). The Program Director and the Dean complete site visit team members' evaluations independently. Oral reports may also be solicited.

CoAEMSP Evaluation

Staff evaluates the completeness of the Site Visit Report, including submitting it promptly, responding to all questions posed in the Executive Analysis, accurately listing all potential *Standards* violations and all the strengths on the Summary page, responding to the Findings Letter draft promptly, and communicating with the CoAEMSP staff.

Randomly the CoAEMSP staff will call site visitors to conduct a follow-up of the site visit; this may happen before or after the Peer Evaluation or PSQ is completed.

Site Visit Team

Each site visitor assesses the team member(s), themselves, and the CoAEMSP staff. If concerns are identified requiring immediate attention, the site visitor is contacted by CoAEMSP staff to discuss the situation.

Compilation of Evaluations

The data obtained by the evaluation mechanisms described will be analyzed to determine general areas of strength and limitation and detect general trends. Such data will provide the basis for planning subsequent education workshops for new and active site visitors.

Semi-annually the CoAEMSP Board evaluates the performance of the site visitors.

VII. Policies

Policies are included throughout the manual. This section concentrates all policies related to Site Visitors.

Destruction of Materials policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2015) states:

Once there has been a final determination of the findings letter, the site team members and any other site visit participants who received materials from the CoAEMSP shall destroy all materials and communications related to that site visit, such as all documents received prior to the visit, any emails pertaining to the visit, the unofficial and official team reports, and notes taken during the visit. Destruction of materials requires deleting all electronic files and shredding any paper documents received.

Site Visitor Consulting policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2012) states:

Consultation by non-board member site visitors - either paid or unpaid - is not specifically prohibited by the CoAEMSP. The practice of consulting is at the sole discretion of the individual doing the consultation and is considered outside of the CoAEMSP/CAAHEP accreditation process. Site Visitors cannot visit the program as CoAEMSP representatives, which they have consulted at any time. Consultation with programs they have visited as a site visitor is also prohibited. Site visitors may not use their CoAEMSP/CAAHEP site visitor role to promote themselves.

Site Visitor Conflict of Interest policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2013) states:

Site visitors should not be assigned to education programs in the same state where the site visitor resides or works or to education programs where professional relationships have been developed. Additionally, site visitors must not be assigned to locations that are geographically close to the program, even if they are in different states.

Site Visitor Gift policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2014) states:

Site visitors can graciously accept program gifts up to a monetary value of approximately \$25. Gifts that appear to be over \$25 should be graciously returned to the program with apologies concerning CoAEMSP site visitor policies.

Social Media policy

(approved by the CoAEMSP Board, August 2014) states:

Rules of Engagement. When you keep in mind these rules of engagement in both your private and professional posts, you will avoid compromising the confidentiality and integrity of the CoAEMSP, preserve your reputation, and avoid legal ramifications:

- Be respectful, polite, and courteous.
- When re-posting, if you alter it, please indicate that you have done so.
- Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, pornography, defamation, or anything that would not be appropriate in the presence of your co-workers or boss
- Be transparent by letting people know you volunteer with the CoAEMSP.
- Do not disclose or mention confidential material, including financial information, site visit findings, program information, or personnel matters.
- Check your facts and write only about what you know
- Do not use copyrighted materials (text or images) without permission.
- If you want to post about a member, colleague, or other third party, obtain their permission first. This includes text, photos, or videos.
- If you comment on any aspect of the CoAEMSP's business, clearly identify yourself as a staff member, site visitor, or board member, along with the following disclaimer: "The views expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CoAEMSP."
- If you disagree with a post or comment, be courteous and diplomatic in your reply.
- Do not include the CoAEMSP logo unless you have received written permission.
- If there is controversy within or about the CoAEMSP, avoid participating in any conversation around the crisis. Keep in mind that even 'anonymous' comments can be traced back to you.

In addition to the above "rules of engagement," [staff and consultants posting and commenting on behalf of the CoAEMSP should](#) maintain the following:

- Limit posts to sharing only information about events, updates & resources.
- When commenting on a holiday, personal event, or occurrence such as a birthday, EMS Week, Presidents' Day, birth, death, or accident, keep the comment appropriate, succinct, and professional.
- Avoid debates or disagreements.
- Do not 'like' sites or posts that are not affiliated with EMS or do not convey a professional manner.
- Do not accept invitations to pages or groups that are not affiliated with EMS or convey a professional manner.

- Posts should be reviewed on a regular basis, and the people writing any posts that could be deemed inappropriate, offensive, or otherwise unprofessional should be deleted as a 'friend'.

Site Visitor Biennial Review

(revised by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

Site visitor status is subject to review biennially by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors and is based upon recommendations by the Site Visit & Visitor Committee. Reappointment recommendations will be based upon both the activity of the site visitor during the prior year(s) and the assessment of the quality of their site visitor performance. Review and reappointment will occur during the February Board of Directors meeting in the even-numbered years.

Number of Site Visitors and Length of a Site Visit policy:

(adopted by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

A regular site visit comprises two appointed site visitors for two days. On a case-by-case basis, CoAEMSP determines if there are special circumstances that require more than two site visitors and/or more than two days. Special circumstances include and are not limited to programs with one or more satellite campuses, distance between satellite campuses, or online/distance learning.

Conflict of Interest from a Program Sponsor toward a site visitor

(adopted by the CoAEMSP Board, February 2018) states:

The CoAEMSP provides the program sponsor with the opportunity to review members of the proposed team to identify any conflicts of interest that would make service by any member of the team inappropriate.

If the program sponsor believes that one or more of the members of the proposed team has a conflict of interest and would not be able to serve as an unbiased member of the team, the program director must notify the CoAEMSP immediately. The following conflicts of interest may include but are not limited to:

- Employed or living in the same geographic region
- Previous employee or appointee of program or sponsor
- Graduated from the program
- Been involved with publicly expressed opinions bearing on accreditation of the program
- Previous employee or appointee of a clinical or field affiliate site
- Has a relative associated with the program or sponsor
- Is or has been a paid or unpaid consultant to the program

Upon disclosure of a possible conflict of interest, the CoAEMSP will make the final determination.