



Credible education
through accreditation

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

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding New Voluntary Accreditation for AEMT Programs

May 2023

Background

Why make this change now?

Ensuring AEMT education programs have the professional resources to meet basic education standards is essential to the quality of AEMT education and the safety and well-being of communities nationwide.

The 2019 [National EMS Scope of Practice Model](#), developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in collaboration with numerous stakeholders, called for enhanced education standards for AEMT programs, including a proposed requirement that AEMTs successfully complete “a nationally accredited or CAAHEP accredited AEMT program that meets all other State/territorial requirements” by January 1, 2025.

Subsequently, in 2021, NHTSA released the [National EMS Education Standards](#), which reaffirmed its support for requiring AEMT program accreditation by January 1, 2025.

Key stakeholders in the 2019 and 2021 efforts turned to CoAEMSP to develop a strategy to implement the recommendation, and that is what we outlined in our May 2023 announcement. CAAHEP and CoAEMSP will work closely with stakeholders to gather perspectives and recommendations on how best to implement the new option.

Why make AEMT accreditation voluntary?

When it comes to the education of health professionals, accreditation is recognized as an essential ingredient in an effective healthcare system. Accreditation establishes standards that ensure high quality education that results in a reliable, consistent, and competent workforce, which in turn can enhance healthcare outcomes.

We believe that many AEMT programs will see the benefit of voluntary accreditation. Indeed, many accredited paramedic education programs also provide AEMT education, and we expect the transition to be a natural one for those organizations.

Are AEMT programs supportive of this change?

Several EMS organizations and subject matter experts were among the many stakeholders that participated in the development of the 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model and the 2021 National EMS Education Standards, both of which called for AEMT program accreditation by January 1, 2025. See page 5 for a complete list.

How will AEMT programs benefit from voluntary accreditation?

AEMT education programs will benefit from voluntary accreditation as it leverages resources to help programs engage in continuous quality improvement (including via peer support), while ensuring programs can meet quality education standards and realize consistent achievement by students. Accreditation offers educators the opportunity to strengthen their program, drawing from the knowledge and experience of others and leveraging resources that they may not even realize are missing.

What are the potential benefits of voluntary accreditation to AEMT students?

Accredited programs promote safe and effective learning environments while continuously improving to prevent outdated or harmful practices. AEMT students *can be confident that successful completion of study at an accredited program will prepare them to sit for the NREMT exam to be nationally certified as an AEMT and be recognized as **professionally entry-level competent** by potential employers.*

Is there a plan to eventually make attendance at an accredited AEMT program required to sit for the NREMT exam, as it is today for paramedics in 47 states?

Any decision to make attendance at an accredited AEMT program a requirement to sit for the NREMT exam would be made by individual states through legislative action.

Implementation

What are the basic requirements of AEMT programs that choose to become accredited?

AEMT education programs will be eligible to apply for a Letter of Review (LoR) on January 1, 2025. But before we begin accepting applications, there are many important steps to complete:

- **May – November 2023** - Robust stakeholder engagement and feedback
- **December 4, 2023** - Open for public comment the policies and interpretations of the CAAHEP *Standards* for AEMT education programs.
- **January 18, 2024** - Public comment period closes. (Feb 4, the CoAEMSP Board reviews the comments and approves the final draft)
- **March 4, 2024** - Publish policies and interpretations of the CAAHEP *Standards* for AEMT education programs.
- **June 1, 2024** - Make available all documents and forms for AEMT programs, including the LoR application, self-study report, site visit report, annual report, etc.
- **January 1, 2025** - Accept LoR applications from AEMT programs.

The standards for AEMT programs have been a part of the [CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in the Emergency Medical Services Professions](#) since 2005. The policies and interpretations of these Standards will be developed with ample stakeholder input, and as a result of that process, the requirements for AEMT programs will be published in March 2024.

What happens to AEMT programs that choose not to be accredited?

Nothing, those programs will continue to operate as they do now. Over time, however, whether or not a program is accredited may become a point of distinction for AEMT students who recognize the value of attending a program that meets essential national standards. Accreditation may also be seen as a benefit by potential employers who appreciate that students graduating from an accredited program are well-prepared and qualified to enter the EMS workforce.

What happens to programs that apply for voluntary accreditation but fail to meet the guidelines?

Accreditation is grounded in the spirit of continuous quality improvement. The accreditation process provides feedback – both from accreditation staff and peer reviewers – to identify areas for improvement as well as best practices and potential innovations. CoAEMSP will work closely with programs to help them identify and address potential shortcomings, but ultimately will be up to the program to implement practices that meet accreditation standards and ensure high quality education.

If CoAEMSP determines it cannot recommend a program for accreditation to CAAHEP, the sponsoring institution is provided with an outline of identified deficiencies. Programs are eligible to re-apply for accreditation once the sponsor believes that the program is in compliance with the accreditation *Standards*.

How does this change impact students in current AEMT programs?

There is no impact on students currently enrolled in AEMT programs. January 2025 is the earliest that an AEMT program can apply for accreditation and receive its LoR.

Who pays for voluntary accreditation? Will accreditation make AEMT education more expensive for students?

Program fees for the voluntary AEMT accreditation are available [here](#) and are paid by the education program. For more information on programs fees and the cost of accreditation, please reach out to CoAEMSP staff for a conversation specific to your program.

How many AEMT programs are there in the United States, and how many do you expect to apply for voluntary accreditation?

In 2021, there were approximately 530 AEMT programs verifying graduates as eligible for the NREMT examination, and approximately 33% of them were sponsored by institutions that also offer an accredited paramedic education program. We anticipate a number of these institutions will explore voluntary AEMT accreditation, and we encourage all other programs to learn more about the process and the benefits.

Will EMT programs be the next to move to voluntary accreditation?

Just as this development came as a result of careful consideration by a number of interested stakeholders, we assume that any future recommendations would be approached in the same manner.

How will CoAEMSP implement this change – will it require additional staff and resources? How will it innovate and change to effectively handle this new responsibility?

Like any growing organization, the CoAEMSP board and staff are continuously analyzing its services, offering new services to support paramedic education programs and AEMT education programs while ensuring the resources are available to support new initiatives. The CoAEMSP Board approved a new [strategic plan](#) in February 2023 with the strategic goal of expanding accreditation services with the implementation of voluntary AEMT accreditation.

For more information, please visit our [website](#) at or [contact](#) a member of our team. Ensuring AEMT education programs have the professional resources to meet basic education standards is essential to the quality of AEMT education and the safety and well-being of communities nationwide. CoAEMSP is proud to lead efforts to develop this option of voluntary accreditation to AEMT education programs nationwide as part of our work to *foster a unified national EMS system of exceptional quality through* accreditation.

The [National EMS Scope of Practice Model](#) – Subject Matter Expert Panel

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Ambulance Association
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Surgeons, Committee on Trauma
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics
National Association of EMS Physicians
National Association of EMS Educators
National EMS Management Association
National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of State EMS Officials

[National EMS Education Standards](#) - National Stakeholder Organizations

Academy of International Mobile Health Integration
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Ambulance Association
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Surgeons, Committee on Trauma
Association of Air Medical Services
Association of Critical Care Transport
Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services
Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems
Congress of Mobile Medical Professionals
EMS for Children (Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal Child and Health Bureau)
Emergency Nurses Association
International Association of EMS Chiefs
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Fire Fighters
International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics
National Association of EMS Physicians
National Association of EMS Educators
National EMS Management Association
National Fire Protection Agency
National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Volunteer Fire Council
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of State EMS Officials