

Site Visits and Visitor Manual



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Credible education
through accreditation

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Mission Statement

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

Vision Statement

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

Core Values | CLARITY

Commitment: Dedication of time, talent and resources toward the achievement of CoAEMSP's mission.

Leadership: Inspiring others to advance the vision and goals of the CoAEMSP.

Accountability: Advancing the mission of the CoAEMSP with integrity, honesty, professionalism and high ethical standards.

Respect: Honoring the perspective of any individual or organization.

Integrated: Carrying out the work of the CoAEMSP in collaboration with EMS stakeholders.

Quality: Consistently meeting or exceeding established standards and expectations in all CoAEMSP activities.

Strategic Goals

GOAL #1

To conduct scholarly inquiry of relevant topics related to accreditation and EMS Education.

GOAL #2

Foster diverse instructional methodologies.

GOAL #3

Explore expanding scope of quality assurance/improvement activities to EMT and AEMT and internationally.

GOAL #4

Continue to strengthen the engagement and effectiveness of the CoAEMSP Board of Directors.

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Key Websites

www.coaemsp.org/Standards.htm
 CAAHEP Standards and the CoAEMSP Interpretations

www.coaemsp.org/ Site_Visits_Visitors.htm
 Site Visit Agenda
 Expense Report



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 fully qualified and competent.

The site visit team must accurately and reliably collect, review, interpret, verify, and document all information pertaining to 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, and unless this information is accurate and fully documented, the Committee will find it difficult to reach a fair and objective decision concerning the education program.

Since the process of accreditation can be influenced by the performance of the site visit team, the following policies and procedures have been developed to ensure consistency and fairness. CoAEMSP's expectation is that delineating the responsibilities and skills of site visitors will assist those already engaged in the process in discharging their responsibilities and will provide the basis for educating new site visitors. Careful preparation and continuing improvement of the site visitation process and performance will increase the precision and consistency of the entire CAAHEP accreditation process.

The notations to the CAAHEP *Standards* that are 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*.

Contact Us

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Question about a site visit?

Contact **Jennifer** via phone or email

Emergency arises en route to or during a site visit?

Email, call and text

Jennifer AND George.

Personal cell phone numbers are found on the back of the site visitor's name badge.

Section 1: 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 a site visitor undergo a rigorous application process, then site visitors are required to remain current with policies and practices of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP. Prior to conducting the first site visit, the site visitor has completed and submitted an application, which includes essay questions; submitted a current curriculum vitae and two (2) letters of recommendation; successfully completed the CAAHEP Site Visitor quiz; and completed a 2-day site visitor workshop.

Applications are reviewed by the CoAEMSP Site Visit Subcommittee, which then makes a recommendation to the CoAEMSP Board of Directors for appointment. The CoAEMSP Board makes the final decision on the appointment of site visitors.

Qualifications

Site visitors are either a paramedic educator or a physician.

Paramedic Educator

1. Employed as an educator in a CAAHEP accredited paramedic program, at least 30% employee to the program.
2. At least two (2) years of full-time experience or five (5) years of part-time experience as a paramedic educator in a CAAHEP accredited paramedic program.
3. Knowledgeable about education issues, especially curriculum, exam development, program evaluation, and student evaluation.

4. Minimum of a Bachelor's degree.
5. Qualified as a Program Director under current CAAHEP *Standards*.

Physician

1. Actively involved in a Paramedic education program.
2. Knowledgeable about education issues.
3. Qualified as a Medical Director under current CAAHEP *Standards*.

In addition to meeting the above requirements for paramedic educator or physician, all site visitors are then required to:

1. Successfully complete the Site Visitor exam on quiz.caahep.org.
2. Successfully complete any required Site Visitor Updates (with post update exam).
3. Consistently achieve acceptable quality assurance reports.
4. Attend any required continuing education (CE) sessions provided by the CoAEMSP (web-based, in-person, or other format) to ensure continuous compliance with CAAHEP *Standards*.
5. Participate in a minimum of three (3) site visits in a 24-month period.
6. 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 Site Visit Subcommittee and the CoAEMSP Board of Directors.

Knowledge, Skills, and Sensitivities

The listing below provides a description of the general competencies expected of site visitors. No single site visitor can possibly be fully proficient in all the areas described; however, should strive to do so. The team approach utilized by the CoAEMSP assumes a complementary integration of the site visitor's knowledge and skills in such a manner that the team, as a whole, exhibits the required competencies.

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

- Full scope of the education program's resources, operations and components as described in the Self Study Report prepared by the institution requesting the visitation.
- CAAHEP *Standards* and the CoAEMSP's *Interpretations of the CAAHEP Standards* applicable to the education program being evaluated. **The CAAHEP *Standards* is 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. Policy revisions may occur often, so this document should be reviewed frequently to ensure the most current version. Refer to www.coaemsp.org/Standards.htm for the CAAHEP *Standards* and the most current interpretations.

Questions regarding the interpretations can be directed to the CoAEMSP Executive Office.

- Existing procedures for accreditation, including due process.

The following represents a description of some basic 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:

- Concerns of those with an investment in the visitation process, including, but not limited to:
 - Privacy
 - Confidentiality of data

- Politics of visitation and accreditation, including but not limited to:
 - Internal and external ramifications of adverse findings or decisions
 - Potential institutional or programmatic misuse of 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 differing 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 or participate on a site visit with a designated site visitor trainer. After the initial training, site visitors must complete periodic CoAEMSP updates to stay current with *Standards* interpretations, CoAEMSP policies, and EMS education.

Appointment

Active

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

To remain an active site visitor, a site visitor must:

- Successfully complete any required Site Visitor Updates (with post update exam).
- Consistently achieve acceptable quality assurance reports.
- Attend any required continuing education (CE) sessions provided by the CoAEMSP (web-based, in-person, or other format) to ensure continuous compliance with CAAHEP *Standards*.
- Participate in a minimum of three (3) site visits in a 24-month period.

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 Subcommittee.

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

- Successfully complete the Site Visitor Training Workshop under current CAAHEP *Standards* or acceptable alternative as identified by the Site Visit Subcommittee.
- If retired and not currently working in a CAAHEP accredited paramedic program, has worked in EMS education within the past five (5) years.

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 Executive Office requesting consideration of reappointment. The letter must include an updated curriculum vitae and an explanation about what has changed to allow time to do 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 three 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 withdrawal of the appointment.

Section 2: Team Composition

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 (2) 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 on-line/distance learning.

A site visit team is comprised of at least two people, either a paramedic educator and a physician or two paramedic educators.

Site visit teams usually consist of two (2) qualified members selected by the CoAEMSP Executive Office from a list of site visitors appointed and approved by the CoAEMSP Board of Directors. The team composition should be a paramedic educator and a physician; however, a team may consist of two (2) paramedic educators. The paramedic educator and physician team are used for an initial accreditation visit and are considered the “gold standard”.

Assignment Criteria

Based on site visitor availability and the level of experience, site visitors will be teamed together. An inexperienced site visitor will always go 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, Executive Director, the CoAEMSP Board of Directors, or the education program believes that a conflict of interest may exist, the site visitor will be excused and another site visitor will be selected.
2. 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.

3. All site visitors are required to acknowledge the Confidentiality Agreement. (The confidentiality agreement is emailed from the CoAEMSP Executive Office in advance of *every* site visit. The acknowledgement is returned via email to the CoAEMSP Executive Office. 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 often 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 personnel; and
- * completing and submitting the Site Visit Report (SVR).

Additional Personnel

Site visitor trainees and/or observers may accompany the site visit team. Site visitor trainees are assigned by the CoAEMSP Executive Office. State EMS Officials are encouraged to accompany the site visit team. Additionally, the Executive Director, or designee, will periodically audit site visits as part of the quality assurance process.

Section 3: Responsibilities

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

The CoAEMSP Executive Office, the site visitors, and the program work together to coordinate the site visit. The responsibilities described below are listed in the chronological order in which they are discharged prior to, during, and after the site visit.

Purpose of the Site Visit and the Site Visit Team

There are multiple steps in the accreditation process and the site visit is an important part of that process. Until CAAHEP makes the final accreditation action, however, no single part of the process, including the site visit, determines a 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 observed during the site visit constitute deficiencies within the program. The CoAEMSP Board will then make a recommendation 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 actually "see" the program, is critical.

[Click here for the Site Visitor Checklist.](#)

Before the Site Visit

The CoAEMSP Executive Office 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 Executive Office their willingness to participate.

A site visitor with a real or perceived conflict of interest with the education program to be evaluated must inform the CoAEMSP Executive Office and disqualify 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.

immediately. The CoAEMSP Executive Office reserves the right to disqualify a site visitor based on a real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest. Prior to each site visit, the site visitor is required to acknowledge the Confidentiality Agreement which is sent in advanced of the site visit.

The CoAEMSP Executive Office should be notified at the earliest possible time if any emergency conflicts arise for the site visitors after assignment to a site visit and prior to the scheduled date(s) of the visit. Additionally, emergency contact information for the site visitor should be provided to the CoAEMSP Executive Office in case it is necessary to make contact while s/he is on a site visit.

Self Study Report

Upon receipt of the program’s Self Study Report (SSR) and the Executive Analysis (EA) (completed by the Executive Office), the site visit team members should review the documents in relation to the CAAHEP *Standards*.

1. Following review of the SSR and the EA, site visit team members should communicate with each other in order to identify concerns, outline specific areas for scrutiny, and develop strategies for data collection and evaluation. This collaboration should be done the evening before the site visit or earlier when possible.
2. When necessary, the site visit Team Captain should communicate with the education Program Director regarding questions about the SSR and supplementary materials the program should make available during the site visit.
3. Site visit team member(s) should communicate with the CoAEMSP Executive Office regarding any questions or concerns not clarified in (1) or (2) above.

Travel

Airline travel arrangements and hotel accommodations are made through the CoAEMSP designated travel agent. When possible, the travel arrangements of the site visit team members should be coordinated.

<p style="text-align: center;">Travel Agent</p>	<p>The travel agent will reserve the lodging accommodations. The plane ticket will be direct billed to CoAEMSP. The hotel will be paid by you at the time of the site visit. You will submit an expense report.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Email jennifer@coaemsp.org for the assigned travel agent</p>	

Each site visitor will receive one (1) check via ACH direct deposit in advance of the site visit for the food per diem in the amount of \$225, which is equivalent to \$75 per day of the site visit. A portion of the per diem check is considered income and is based on the per diem rate for the destination city. A 1099 is issued when an individual’s

Conflict of Interest from a Program Sponsor toward a site visitor

(to propose to 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 Executive Office will make the final determination.

collective income reaches \$600. It is the responsibility of the individual to claim the income on their personal income taxes.

Upon request by a site visitor, a site visitor may request in advance a check to cover hotel costs. This request should be made at least four (4) weeks before the site visit.

If there is money that remains at the end of the site visit from the food per diem, the site visitor may keep the money. The site visitor must submit an expense report within 14 days of the site visit. CoAEMSP will reimburse within 14 days of receiving the expense report.

The education program should provide ground transportation for the site visit team to and from the airport and during the site visit, if possible. Site visit team members are responsible for confirming the ground transportation with the Program Director. A rental car may be used; however, requires preauthorization from the CoAEMSP Executive Director and the Program Director.

ALL modes of transportation to and from the host city airport and lodging accommodations must be coordinated with the Executive Office to ensure compliance with CoAEMSP Policies and Procedures.

Agenda

The site visit agenda should be arranged by the Program Director in consultation with the site visit Team Captain. The Program Director may choose to use the sample agenda located at www.coaemsp.org/Site_Visits_Visitors.htm. When necessary, the agenda should be modified to ensure that the relevant parties can be interviewed and pertinent data can be collected and verified. Final approval of the agenda is the responsibility of the Team Captain.

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 followed by the exit summation with the administration and program personnel. The order of the other activities in between will vary based on availability of students, graduates, employers, faculty, and travel time to and from the clinical and field internship sites.

Key elements to scheduling the site visit include:

- * **Meeting with the Program Director** to review the site visit schedule and make any necessary adjustments.
- * **Hosting the Opening General Group Session** to inform the administration and program personnel about the purposes, function, and mechanics of the site visit and its relationship to the accreditation processes of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP.

- * **Interviewing students and reviewing student records and program files** on Day 1. Information collected during these formal activities often provide additional information to support the other activities of the site visit.

Everything in between may be arranged as necessary:

- * Interviewing graduates, employers, Medical Director, faculty, Advisory Committee members
- * Reviewing student records and program files
- * Visiting clinical and field sites

The site visit will conclude with:

- * **Meeting informally with the Program Director**, which may include the Dean.
- * **Providing an Exit 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 prior to the withdrawal unless documentation of an emergency is provided. 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 plan to meet with each other before the beginning of the site visit. At this meeting, the site visit team should review issues arising from the Self Study Report, the Executive Analysis, the agenda, and finalize the evaluative strategies.

During the Site Visit

Interview questions are the foundation of the site visit. Phrasing the question properly will elicit more information and accurate information.

The site visit is a dynamic and flexible process that is adapted to the type and size of the program reviewed and the completeness and clarity of the Self Study Report (SSR). A list of suggested questions has been developed for each of the groups or individuals that the site visitors interview. The questions serve as conversation starters, and are not meant to be verbatim questions, but rather topics to pursue. There is no correct or set order to the questions. The identified questions are by no means 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_Visitors.htm.

The use of open questions is 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.

Initial Meeting with the Program Director

Fears and/or anxieties should be allayed, but no promises should be made regarding accreditation decisions. Site visit team members should remind the education Program Director that they are only gathering information and do not influence or make final accreditation recommendations.

This meeting is also a good opportunity to hear candid remarks from the Program Director as well as updates and any program changes that may have occurred since the SSR was originally submitted.

General Session with Program Officials

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

1. Introduce the site visitors. Include names and titles. Backgrounds should include role in EMS education, EMS systems, and emergency medical care.
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

against the CAAHEP *Standards*. **You are not there to tell the program how you do it or how to do it in general.** Their program is not evaluated against your program. Make that clear.

4. State that all the information that 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 Basic or Advanced EMT program.
7. Explain that you will review the medical control and quality improvement aspects of the EMS system(s) in which the students are placed for field internship.
8. Discuss that in order to obtain an accurate reflection of the program, you need to interview students, graduates, employers, and clinical and field preceptors without the program director or faculty present.
9. Emphasize that the process is not only to gather information, but also to be consultative. The CAAHEP *Standards* provide minimum requirements.

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, program Advisory Board 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 education program personnel, medical director(s), support staff, students, graduates and representatives from the program's Advisory Committee.

Documentation & the Site Visit Report

The site visit team must carefully document all findings according to the outline provided in the Site Visit Report. The Site Visit Report is the communication to the CoAEMSP Board of Directors and CoAEMSP Executive Office detailing the findings of the site visit.

Some questions appear to relate to one another and are indeed asking for a different answer. Do not comment by writing “see above” or refer to a previously answered question. Even if you have to 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 and/or education program weaknesses. For example, if the Standard in question is identified as medical director does not “assure the competence of each graduate...”, substantiation may consist of reference to statements made by the students or staff, to 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.
- For all Standards “Not Met”, references must be made to the Standard cited.
- All Standards marked as “Not Met” must have a rationale as to why and how the site team determined that there was a potential Standards violation.
- All questions posed in the Executive Analysis must be addressed and answered at the end of the Site Visit Report.

Additional notes should be stated in the Site Visit Report further clarifying an issue or providing additional information on the program. The SVR is used to prepare the Findings Letter (FL) and is reviewed by the CoAEMSP Board when formulating its recommendation to CAAHEP. Additional information is encouraged that would provide a better snapshot of the program.

Editorials regarding your personal thoughts and feelings about the program are not allowed and may lead to problems when the CoAEMSP Executive Office has to address the program. Please refrain from including personal biases and reference to your own program while conducting the site visit and completing the report.

Exit Summation

REMEMBER

- ✓ READ the Executive Analysis (EA) just like you read the ISSR/CSSR preparing for the site visit.
 - ✓ Explain all “Not Met”
 - ✓ Respond to ALL questions in the EA
 - ✓ State why the program does NOT meet a Standard
 - ✓ Email CoAEMSP Executive Office the Site Visit Report within 1 week of the site visit
-

This session includes those individuals invited by the program, and may include administration, 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. Reemphasize
 - Site visit team maintains confidentiality of the information associated with the site visit not otherwise public
 - Program will receive a written report in the form of a Findings Letter and an official copy of the Site Visit Report
 - Program has been reviewed based on the CAAHEP *Standards*
 - Site visit team does not recommend accreditation status
 - Program will respond to CoAEMSP directly with written clarifications
 - Program will receive official notification from CAAHEP of CAAHEP's action.
2. Program will receive an online evaluation form from CoAEMSP to assess the site visit team and the CoAEMSP Executive Office
3. Present Strengths
4. Present Potential Standards violations
5. Present other Recommendations

An UNOFFICIAL paper copy of the Summary Page of the Site Visit Report may be left with the program director at the conclusion of the site visit.

Under no circumstances are the site visit team members to indicate their personal views or predict programmatic results, CoAEMSP recommendations, or CAAHEP actions.

After the Site Visit

Following the site visit, team members are required to:

1. Submit via email the Site Visit Report within one (1) week of the conclusion of the site visit.
2. Submit the CoAEMSP Expense Report with all expense vouchers/receipts within two (2) weeks of the site visit completion directly to CoAEMSP's CPA firm. (The expense report is provided with the email confirming the site visit and at [www.coaemsp.org/ Site_Visits_Visitors.htm](http://www.coaemsp.org/Site_Visits_Visitors.htm).) *The CoAEMSP will not reimburse expenses incurred by site visit team members if the expense report is submitted more than 30 days after the site visit.*
3. Communicate directly with the CoAEMSP Executive Director or key CoAEMSP staff person for site visits if there are concerns about a site visitor's performance.
4. Report to the CoAEMSP Executive Office any impropriety or unusual circumstance that could affect the validity of the site visit.
5. Submit the names of the program director and/or medical director to the CoAEMSP Executive Office if you recommend either as a potential site visitor.
6. Complete and return via online survey the Peer Evaluation. (The link will be provided to you following 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

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 visit, any emails pertaining to the visit, the unofficial and official team reports, and notes taken during visit. Destruction of materials requires deleting all electronic files and shredding of any paper documents received.

Findings Letter

Upon receipt of the SVR, the CoAEMSP Executive Office will prepare the Findings Letter. The FL 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. In addition, the program may submit new documentation of corrective actions taken after the site visit.

A draft of the Findings Letter will be provided to the site visit team for review and comment prior to it being forwarded to the program. The site visit team will have up to one (1) week to review it. The final FL will be sent to the program and it will become part of the permanent and 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 Findings Letter.

Site Visitor Checklist

Task	Responsibility	Due Date
Call PD to introduce self; provide background experience related to EMS education; discuss agenda	TC	Within 5 days of receiving confirmation email w PD's contact info
Communicate with SV team regarding arrival and departure times; introduce self	TC	Within 10 days of receiving confirmation email w PD's contact info
Contact CoAEMSP Travel Agent to Book Airline Ticket & Reserve Hotel	TC & TM	After the Team Captain has talked about the preliminary schedule with the program director
Send Self Study Report, Executive Analysis, and per diem/advance	Staff	4-6 weeks before site visit
Complete site visit agenda with PD	TC	2 weeks before site visit
Communicate w SV team about structure of SV, potential areas of concern	TC / TM	1 week before site visit
Communicate ground transportation arrangements to SV team	PD	1 week before site visit
Pack for Site Visit, including the: Executive Analysis – Self Study Report – Site Visit Report form – <i>Standards</i> .	SV Team	
Site Visit Takes Place		
Email Unofficial Site Visit Report to CoAEMSP	TC	Within 1 week of site visit
Email Expense Report to CPA	TC & TM	Within 2 weeks of site visit
Draft & Review Findings Letter	Staff / SV Team	Within 4-6 weeks after receipt of SVR
Send Findings Letter & Official Site Visit Report to Program	Staff	Within 60 days of site visit
Complete Peer Evaluation	TC & TM	Within 45 days of site visit
Complete PSQ	PD & Dean	Within 45 days of site visit
Respond to the Findings Letter	PD	60 days before next CoAEMSP meeting (date will be identified in letter)

TM = Team Member
TC = Team Captain

PD = Program Director
Staff = CoAEMSP Executive Office Staff

SV = Site Visit
PSQ = Post Survey Questionnaire

Section 4: Professionalism

Site visitors are the representatives of the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP; therefore, the behavior of the members of the site visit team will be interpreted as a direct reflection of the professional and ethical expectations held by the accrediting agency they represent. Although behavioral concerns arise infrequently, this issue has provided cause for questioning the accountability and credibility of the system. Careful adherence to the following principles of behavior should minimize such occurrences and strengthen the educational community's confidence in the accreditation process. In fact, just as in the evaluation of any paramedic educational program, appropriate affective behavior is of paramount importance 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 the professional image that is in keeping with the needs of our educational programs to trust us. Site visitors should project the image of a trustworthy, knowledgeable professional for the programs who seek accreditation and our consultative and facilitative services. This means that jeans and sneakers are not appropriate attire.

Behavioral Concerns¹

There are a few cardinal rules for site visitors to paramedic education programs:

- **Do not tell them how you do it.** They really don't care. Moreover, you give the impression that you are evaluating their program against yours. You cannot do that.
- **Inspect all of the required areas;** cover all of the CAAHEP *Standards!* The process has no credibility if you indicate something is in substantial compliance and it has never been reviewed. The schedule leaves enough time to cover all areas.
- **If clinical or field internship areas are too numerous to visit each location,** the site visit team should select what **they** wish to see. Pre-selection by the program can stack the deck.
- **Explain that you wish to interview students, graduates, and preceptors, without program faculty 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 a Standard.
- **Resist the temptation to tell them how to do it.** General suggestions and ideas on how to accomplish 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 he/she said."
- **Be honest.** There should be no surprises in the final report. The contents of the report should be discussed at the exit summation.
- **Read the Self Study Report.** The process lacks credibility if the site visitors are unfamiliar with the materials. The program has put a great deal of 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. This includes assignment 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

¹ 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)

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 at any time in the past they have served as a consultant to the program or the sponsor. A conflict of interest may also arise when a clear 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 process of accreditation 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 institution or program being visited. 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 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 obvious deficiencies. Overlooking such weaknesses is not only inappropriate, but 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 is doing its best to meet the *Standards*.

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 program with apologies concerning CoAEMSP site visitor policies.

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

*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 of 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.

- **Responsibility and authority should not be abused.** The site visitors may find that a marginal program is 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 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 own institutions. Never take advantage of the opportunity afforded by your position as a site visitor to lure good faculty members away from the program being visited.
- **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 does not approve solicitation of site visitors to be employed by the program nor for site visitors to use the site visit as a means of job-hunting.

Section 5: Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is critical to the success of the accreditation process. Site visitors are evaluated by their team member, themselves, the Program Director, the Dean or comparable administrator, and the CoAEMSP Executive Staff.

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 is dependent upon 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 own 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 Program Director and Dean or equivalent, are asked by the CoAEMSP Executive Office to complete an evaluation using an objective rating scale assessing the knowledge, skills, sensitivities, and behavior (as described herein) of the site visit team. Evaluation of site visit team members is completed independently by the program director and the dean. Oral reports may also be solicited.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CoAEMSP_PSQ_2015

CoAEMSP Evaluation

Staff evaluates the completeness of the Site Visit Report, including: submitting it in a timely manner, responding to all questions posed in the Executive Analysis, listing all potential *Standards* violations accurately and all the strengths on the Summary page; responding to the Findings Letter draft in a timely manner; 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 are completed.

Site Visit Team

Each site visitor is asked to assess the team member(s) as well as themselves and the CoAEMSP staff. Each year, site visitors will receive a composite evaluation. If concerns are identified that require immediate attention, the site visitor will be contacted by CoAEMSP staff to discuss the situation.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PeerEvalRevamped>

Compilation of Evaluations

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

Semi-annually the CoAEMSP Site Visit & Visitor Subcommittee evaluates the performance of the site visitors. The Site Visit Subcommittees recommend to the CoAEMSP Board additions to and deletions from the list of active site visitors.

Section 6: Policies

Policies are included throughout the manual. This section places all of the policies related to Site Visitors in a concentrated space.

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 visit, any emails pertaining to the visit, the unofficial and official team reports, and notes taken during visit. Destruction of materials requires deleting all electronic files and shredding of any paper documents received.

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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 of 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 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 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 own 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 work for 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 a crisis within the CoAEMSP, avoid participating in any conversation around the crisis. Keep in mind that even 'anonymous' comments can possibly 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 also 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 disagreement
- 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 Subcommittee. 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 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 is comprised of two (2) 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 on-line/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
- 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 Executive Office will make the final determination.