



## FAQs on Becoming Accredited

- Q. Why is accreditation important?
- Q. What is the accreditation initiative?
- Q. What are the benefits of accreditation for paramedic educational programs?
- Q. Is the CoAEMSP the only nationally accrediting agency for EMS?
- Q. Are workshops or webinars available for learning more about the accreditation process?
- Q. What are the steps in the accreditation process?
- Q. I thought state EMS offices were responsible for authorizing training programs in my state. Does the CAAHEP accreditation process supersede our state EMS office?
- Q. Can you explain the self-study, on-site evaluation, and committee review and recommendation?
- Q. How long does the accreditation process take?
- Q. How much does it cost to become accredited?
- Q. How do we get started?
- Q. Is the Program Director required to possess a Bachelors degree?
- Q. Is it mandatory that our program be affiliated with a college or university?
- Q. Does our accreditation expire?
- Q. Can CAAHEP help with the accreditation process?
- Q. What other organizations are related to accreditation that might have useful information?

### **Q: Why is accreditation important?**

**A:** Accreditation is an effort to assess the quality of institutions, programs and services, measuring them against agreed-upon standards and thereby assuring that they meet those standards. In the case of post-secondary education and training, there are two kinds of accreditation: institutional and programmatic (or specialized).

Institutional accreditation helps to assure potential students that a school is a sound institution and has met certain minimum standards in terms of administration, resources, faculty and facilities.

Programmatic accreditation examines specific schools or programs within an educational institution (e.g., the law school, the medical school, the nursing program). The standards by which these programs are measured have generally been developed by the professionals involved in each discipline and are intended to reflect what a person needs to know and be able to do to function successfully within that profession. Accreditation in the health-related disciplines also serves a very important public interest. Along with certification and licensure, accreditation is a tool intended to help assure a well-prepared and qualified workforce providing health care services.

**Q: What is the accreditation initiative?**

**A:** The National EMS community asked for accreditation as part of the [EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A System's Approach \(2000\)](#). The Institute of Medicine's (IOM) [EMS at the Crossroads \(2006\)](#) also recommended a single national EMS accrediting agency for the country as part of a process of standardization in EMS education. Additionally, several current research articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals indicate an increased success rate on national certification exams from graduates of nationally accredited Paramedic programs.

*At the present time, EMS is one of the few, if not the only, allied health care profession that does not require its educational programs to be accredited. If the EMS professions are to ever enjoy the stability, respect, and benefits of being considered an allied health care profession, we must strive to meet nationally established standards of adult medical education.*

In November 2007, the Board of Directors of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) voted to require that paramedic applicants for certification graduate from an "accredited" paramedic program effective January 1, 2013. The NREMT is requiring programmatic accreditation as outlined in the *EMS Education Agenda for the Future*. Institutional accreditation does not meet the purpose of accreditation outlined in the Agenda. Therefore, the NREMT will be requiring accreditation by the CoAEMSP.

The EMS community believes that combining this accreditation requirement with state licensure/certification will help assure the protection of students and ensure that paramedic candidates are well prepared and qualified to provide safe and effective out-of-hospital care.

**Q: What are the benefits of accreditation of paramedic educational programs?**

**A:** Accreditation helps answer the question: How good is this educational program? The benefits cited most often by accredited programs include:

- Outside quality improvement
- Maintaining curriculum currency
- Ability for graduates to obtain employment
- Research indicates that graduates of accredited EMS education programs perform better on the NREMT exam
- Marketing

In addition, the quality of your program is important to:

- Your bosses and colleagues
- Your students
- Potential students, their parents, their families and even their counselors
- Your competitors

- Licensing boards, certifying agencies and other government agencies
- Future employers of your students
- Other members of your profession including fellow employees of your students
- The patient

**Q: Is the CoAEMSP the only nationally accrediting agency for EMS?**

**A:** YES. Although CAAHEP is the actual accrediting agency, the CoAEMSP represents the EMS profession and has for over the past 30 years when the Paramedic was recognized as an allied health occupation by the American Medical Association in 1975. Currently, the CoAEMSP Board of Directors is sponsored by the following organizations:

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)  
 American Ambulance Association (AAA)  
 American College of Cardiology (ACC)  
 American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)  
 American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians (ACOEP)  
 American College of Surgeons (ACS)  
 American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)  
 International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)  
 National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE)  
 National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP)  
 National Association of EMT's (NAEMT)  
 National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)  
 National Registry of EMT's (NREMT)

These Sponsors represent the specialties and organizations of the EMS profession and are all committed to the accreditation process. The members of each sponsoring organization serve on the Board of Directors and perform duties as program Reviewers and Site Visitors, in addition to their many other duties and commitments.

**Q. Are workshops or webinars available for learning more about the accreditation process?**

**A:** Yes, both workshops and webinars are available.

**Accreditation workshops** are sponsored in conjunction with the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE). Workshops are held across the country and cover topics such as accreditation overview, self study, site visit preparation, and the preparation of annual reports. A current listing of workshops can be found [here](#).

**Accreditation webinars.** Accreditation webinars sponsored by the CoAEMSP assist with the accreditation process and answer your questions about accreditation. These webinars are typically held on a monthly basis. A current list of webinars can be found [here](#).

**Q: What are the steps in the accreditation process?**

**A: The steps are outlined below.**

**Step 1**

The program files a request for accreditation services, signed by the sponsor institution's CEO. This form is available [here](#) and is submitted online to CAAHEP and CoAEMSP. The CoAEMSP may require additional application materials to be completed. This request to begin the process is NOT an application. A program is not considered to have applied until a completed Self Study Report is submitted.

**Step 2**

The program becomes familiar with the resources available in the [Becoming Accredited](#) section of the CoAEMSP website.

The program also becomes familiar with the resources available on [www.caahep.org](http://www.caahep.org), including [Your Accreditation Mentor \(YAM\)](#). YAM is a free service from CAAHEP to all program directors, but especially to newly appointed program directors, to guide their understanding of the accreditation process and to advise them on good practices. It consists of narrative pages, video vignettes, reference readings, and links to various resources. YAM is about succeeding at one of the key processes of the program director's job: accreditation, assuring that their program meets or exceeds standards and therefore serves its students and other stakeholders well.

**Step 3**

The program downloads the [Initial Self Study Report \(ISSR\)](#).

**Step 4**

The program conducts a self-evaluation which culminates in a Self Study Report to the CoAEMSP.

**Step 5**

The program submits a completed ISSR and the application fees to CoAEMSP.

**Step 6**

The CoAEMSP Executive Director reads the Self Study Report, completes an Executive Analysis, and evaluates the Self Study Report to determine the Program's readiness to receive a site visit.

**Step 7**

If major problems exist in the ISSR, clarification or further documentation may be requested prior to a site visit of the program.

**Step 8**

The Executive Analysis is sent to the Program Director.

**Step 9**

The site visit team conducts a review, including an exit summation to present its findings verbally to the institution and Program representatives. The site visit is scheduled with input from both the Program and the site visit team.

**Step 10**

After the site visit, the site visit team completes and submits to CoAEMSP the Site Visit Report. The CoAEMSP Executive Office writes a concise Findings Letter to the Program detailing the Program's strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for improvement.

**Step 11**

The Site Visit Report is sent to the Program Director and/or an appropriate institutional official to provide an opportunity for comment and for correction of factual errors and observations as well as submission of additional information.

**Step 12**

The accreditation recommendation is formulated by CoAEMSP based upon review of the Self Study Report, the Site Visit Report and other appropriate information.

### **Step 13**

CoAEMSP recommendation is forwarded to CAAHEP. If the CoAEMSP's recommendation is for probation or accreditation withhold or withdraw, the program is notified and offered the opportunity to request reconsideration.

### **Step 14**

The CAAHEP Board of Directors reviews and votes on recommendations from the CoAEMSP.

### **Step 15**

The institution and the Program are informed of the accreditation action taken by the CAAHEP Board. Actions to withdraw or withhold accreditation are appealable to CAAHEP.

**Q: I thought state EMS offices were responsible for authorizing training programs in my state. Does the CAAHEP accreditation process supersede our state EMS office?**

**A:** NO. Individual state laws, rules and requirements remain the central authority for who is authorized to provide EMS education in each state. The accreditation process is designed to supplement and support state EMS offices in providing clear guidelines and standards for education.

The CAAHEP process is not designed to be punitive and is not an enforcement tool. The CAAHEP standards are relatively broad since they apply to all programs throughout the United States. Individual states may have more specific requirements, or implement standards related to issues in their locale. Ultimately, the state EMS office remains the point authority in terms of allowing programs to function. However, state EMS offices are informed of the accreditation process of programs in their jurisdiction. This information includes notification of applications, scheduling of site visits, and other routine public matters throughout the accreditation process. Through the CoAEMSP structure, input from state EMS directors and state EMS training coordinators is solicited in the development of the CAAHEP standards.

**Q: Can you explain the self-study, on-site evaluation, and committee review and recommendation?**

**A: The Self Study** – the program does its own analysis of how well it measures up to the established CAAHEP *Standards*, which culminates into the Self Study Report.

**The Site Visit** consists of a team of "site visitors" who travel to the institution to determine how accurately the self study report reflects the status of the program and to answer any additional questions that arise. This is a "peer review" process and often, after the formal part of the site visit is concluded, team members will share ideas for how a program can be strengthened or improved.

**The Committee Review and Recommendation** consists of the CoAEMSP reviewing the Site Visit Report, the Program's response from the Findings Letter, and other documentation provided during the review process and making a recommendation to CAAHEP. If there are areas where the Program fails to meet the CAAHEP *Standards*, these "deficiencies" are identified and progress reports are requested to assure that each program continues its efforts to fully comply with all of the *Standards*. The CAAHEP Board of Directors acts upon the recommendation forwarded from the CoAEMSP, assuring that due process has been met and the *Standards* are applied consistently and equitably.

**Q: How long does the accreditation process take?**

**A:** One size DOES NOT fit all. Every educational program is different and they will each contain unique areas. Therefore, each application for accreditation receives individual attention by the CoAEMSP and so each timeframe varies. However, the average length of time for the accreditation process is 12 months.

**Q: How much does it cost to become accredited?**

**A:** Generally, accreditation costs approximately **8.4 cents for each student for each contact hour**. Since the average Paramedic course is between 1000-1200 hours (1100 hour average), \$92.00 per student ÷ 1100 hours = \$0.084 per student per contact hour, which the CoAEMSP considers a minimal cost to the program for their accreditation investment.

The annual fee for accreditation is \$1,200.00 to maintain the program's on-going accreditation and support the various services provided to programs by CoAEMSP.

1. CAAHEP has an Institutional Fee of \$450.00 that is due annually for the program. If your institution has more than one CAAHEP program this single fee is spread over all of the programs.
2. At the end of the accreditation period, the Program is required to conduct a Self Study Report and host a site visit. On average this takes place in five (5) year intervals. The Program is responsible for paying the actual costs (travel, accommodations and meals) of the site visit. Depending on specific travel arrangements, these costs will vary. The average cost of a site visit by two site visitors is \$2,500.00.
3. With the submission of a Self Study Report, a Self Study Report Evaluation Fee of \$500.00 is due.

It is important to consider both the initial costs and the costs in context over a 5-year period as illustrated by the chart below:

Description of Fee	Initial	Annual (after initial year)	Reaccreditation (every 5 years)
CoAEMSP Annual	\$1200 Paid with submission of CAAHEP <i>Request for Accreditation Services</i>	\$1200	
CAAHEP Annual	\$450	\$450	
Self Study Report Evaluation	\$500 Paid with submission of ISSR	\$0	\$500 Paid with submission of CSSR
Technology	\$250 Paid with submission of ISSR	\$0	\$0
Site Visit	\$2500 (approximate) Deposit due with submission of ISSR Balance of costs invoiced after the site visit	\$0	\$2500 (approximate)
Total	\$4900	\$1650	\$3000

Based on a class of 25 students per year and an average of 1100 course contact hours the anticipated cost per student is \$0.084 per student contact hour.

**Q: How do we get started?**

**A:** JUST DO IT! As mentioned in the famous advertisement, getting started is the hardest thing to do. As you prepare for accreditation it is important that you take time to become familiar with the process and required materials. All of the information and resources you need are in the 'Becoming Accredited' section of the CoAEMSP website.

**Q: Is the Program Director required to possess a Bachelors degree?**

**A:** Yes. The CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines* require the Program Director to hold a Bachelors degree to run the program. Recognizing that this requirement may impact programs seeking accreditation, in February 2008, the CoAEMSP Board of Directors stated that **any new** program that submits their self study report and fees to the CoAEMSP for evaluation prior to January 1, 2011, *will allow the Program Director to demonstrate continual enrollment and progress (as defined by 15 semester hours per year) toward a Bachelors degree until successfully completed.* This progress will be monitored by CoAEMSP. Failure to meet the requirement may lead to probation and ultimately to the withdrawal of accreditation. There is NO mandate that requires a Program Director to possess a Master's degree; however, it is recommended if they oversee a Paramedic education program.

**Q: Is it mandatory that our program be affiliated with a college or university?**

**A:** No; however, the program MUST meet one of the sponsorship requirements outlined in the Standards and Guidelines. There are a number of sponsorship options. A sponsor can be:

1. A post-secondary academic institution accredited by an institutional accrediting agency. This is a college, university, community college, junior college that is accredited by a regional or national institutional accrediting body. Vocational schools, proprietary schools, and religious schools may be accredited by regional accrediting agencies or specialized institutional accrediting bodies. A list of approved accrediting organizations can be found on the US Department of Education web site.
2. A foreign post-secondary academic institution approved by CAAHEP. This will be determined on a case by case basis.
3. A hospital, clinic, or medical center may be a sponsor under certain conditions. The hospital, clinic, or medical center must maintain permanent records, must insure quality of the program, and must assure that all fair practices are followed. A hospital, clinic, or medical center may be a sponsor:
  - a. It must be accredited by The Joint Commission or its equivalent, and authorized by the State to provide health care
  - b. It must have one of the following:
    - an accredited allied health program where the entity is the primary sponsor, - OR -
    - an office of graduate medical education with at least one residency program for postgraduate physician education -OR-
    - an articulation agreement with an accredited educational institution (Standard I.A.1) which can provide college credits for the training.

An **articulation agreement** is an agreement between an educational institution and a training facility to provide college credit to individuals completing the training program. This agreement allows students to receive college credit if they enroll at the educational institution; it does not require that students who do not register receive college credit.

4. A governmental fire academy or EMS training agency may be a sponsor:
  - a. It must be an agency of the federal, state, city, or county government
  - b. It must be authorized by the State to provide initial educational programs
    - i. It must
      - - EITHER - -
        - have an articulation agreement with an educational institution (Standard I.A.1.) that can provide college credits for the training, if it cannot give credits in its own rights
        - OR --
        - be recognized by the state as a postsecondary educational institution
5. A consortium sponsor is an entity consisting of two or more members that exists for the purpose of operating an educational program. In such instances, at least one of the members of the consortium must meet the requirements of a sponsoring educational institution as described in I.A.

A consortium agreement is made, which is an agreement, contract, or memorandum of understanding between two entities to provide governance of a program. The members of the consortium set up a separate Board to establish and run an educational program. The governance, lines of authority, and roles of each partner must be established in the agreement, and have an organizational chart.

**Q: Does our accreditation expire?**

**A:** With the exception of initial status, CAAHEP accreditation is not time limited, but remains in place until another action is taken. The interval between program evaluations is five (5) years.

The CAAHEP Board of Directors reserves the right to place a program on probation or withdraw accreditation at such time that the program no longer meets CAAHEP *Standards* and has been appropriately notified.

**Q. Can CAAHEP help with the accreditation process?**

**A.** Yes, CAAHEP offers a free service called Your Accreditation Mentor (YAM). [YAM](#) is for all program directors, especially newly appointed program directors. YAM helps program directors understand the accreditation process, advises them on good practices, and helps them succeed in accreditation—one of the key processes of their job. The YAM website consists of narrative pages, video vignettes, reference readings, and links to various resources.

**Q. What other organizations are related to accreditation that might have useful information?**

**A.** There are a number of organizations that are related to accreditation. They are listed below:

**Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions- ASAHP.** [ASAHP](#) represents four year institutions on the CAAHEP Board of Directors.

**Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs- CAAHEP.** [CAAHEP](#) is the largest programmatic accreditor in the health sciences field. In collaboration with its Committees on Accreditation, CAAHEP reviews and accredits over 2000 educational programs in twenty (20) health science occupations. CAAHEP awards accreditation to Paramedic education programs based on the review and recommendation of the CoAEMSP. The [CAAHEP Accreditation Manual](#) provides complete information regarding the accreditation process, standards and guidelines, and more.

**Council for Higher Education- CHEA.** [CHEA](#) is national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. CHEA is the "accreditor" of CAAHEP.

**Health Resources and Services Administration- HRSA.** [HRSA](#) has provided CAAHEP with a contract to address emergency preparedness in the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*.

**National Network of Health Career Programs in Two Year Colleges.** [NN2](#) represents two year institutions on the CAAHEP Board of Directors.

**Your Accreditation Mentor - [YAM](#)** is a free service for all program directors, but especially for newly appointed program directors, to guide their understanding of the accreditation process and to advise them on good practices. It consists of narrative pages, video vignettes, reference readings, and links to various resources. YAM is about succeeding at one of the key processes of program director's job: accreditation, assuring that their program meets or exceeds standards and therefore serves its students and other stakeholders well.

**United States Department of Education- [USDE](#).** CAAHEP is no longer recognized by USDE but is instead recognized by CHEA. CAAHEP chose to no longer seek recognition from the USDE.

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## Link

[Read the candid perspectives of program directors about accreditation.](#)