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Marvin A. Wayne, MD, FACEP
Medical Director

Emergency Medical Services

Having served as a pioneer in the development of educational standards for the education of paramedics it gives me pleasure to comment.

In the early days of paramedic education there were no standards, and a paramedic in one area may have been educated with no similarity to one in another. The teaching programs were either whatever a state demanded, or where no rules occurred—whatever the school or mom and pop organization decided upon.

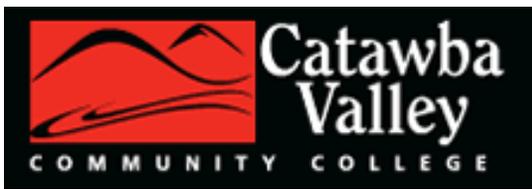
With the advent of standardization, states now have a national standard to work from, and schools have a standard to meet. A paramedic in one accredited program should be able to meet the minimum standard of one trained in another accredited program.

No other organization has made as much of an impact on paramedic training as has CoAEMSP. Hopefully this accreditation process will serve the provider and patient long into the future.

Sincerely,

Marvin A. Wayne, MD

Medical Program Director



Having completed my fourth self study I am now currently awaiting my next site visit. Honestly I get as anxious as anyone would be in that we are undergoing yet another evaluation process. Yet having admitted to my own insecurities I can say that each and every time we complete a self study and site visit we get better. There is no doubt in my mind.

The self study gives the program an opportunity to look at itself and compare what they are doing versus what is in the standards and guidelines. We are all so busy that I believe it is normal human behavior to put off something like a self evaluation. The formal process of a self study first and foremost leads to a deadline which most of us need and secondly offers us a great format to really take a look at what we are doing and also forces us to look at things in a different way. Each and every time I complete the study I find things that I want to change or modify. We then evaluate if the change is good or bad and then either adopt the changes or look at other options. It is an ongoing process and though at times I moan at having to do yet another report I am certain that the end result will be worth it.

Part of the process to maintain accreditation is the annual report. This report helps to keep your program on track. By looking at yearly goals any problems that might be present should be identified and they can be fixed in a timely fashion. It has been our experience that our institutional effectiveness program falls right in with the goals we evaluate on a yearly basis thus making my job easier.

One of the aspects of accreditation that I did not anticipate years ago is that having the accreditation standards assist me when I need to go to our administration with requests. There are many things each of us may want to do for our students and programs. Yet the reality is that administration has finite resources and must decide who gets what. It has been a very positive thing being able to show that requests are tied into standards and guidelines that must be maintained for accreditation. If I can show the administration the connection, the request is almost always granted.

The better our program is the better our product is, which are our graduates. With the evaluations sent out yearly to new grads and employers I feel confident that we are doing the right thing for our students. We can always strive to be better and accreditation will help you to do that.

I want to say one final thing about the accreditation process and that is about the staff and site evaluators that I have dealt with from CoAEMSP. As I said I have been doing this for a long time now and never in all that time have I ever had a reason to complain about staff or site visitors. Everyone I have had dealings with has been well informed, cooperative and friendly. No matter what the issue I have to discuss is, I feel very comfortable about calling them as a resource. I have the greatest respect for the accreditation process and would encourage anyone to go for it. You will not be sorry.

Martha McCrea, Department Head
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LOYOLA EMERGENCY MEDICAL CENTER EMT-PARAMEDIC PROGRAM

Hello and welcome to the journey of accreditation!

Are you intimidated, hesitant and anxious about accreditation? Great, then you are on the right road! My name is Lauri Beechler and I am Director of Loyola University Medical Center Paramedic Program, a hospital based program in the Chicago area, which was accredited in 1995. I have felt your pain and must say that I have embraced accreditation so much that I now volunteer to conduct site visits for CoAEMSP.

The stress you feel is because you want to have the best program around too, and are worried you can not do it. I am here to tell you that you can do it! After all these years, I still get butterflies and stressed when our renewal is due. The desire to maintain the best program with the highest quality drives us to maintain accreditation. That is also CoAEMSP's goal.

The resources and support I have found and utilized through CoAEMSP have been unbelievable. When I have encountered challenges, there has always been someone to help me process them and determine how to meet the standard and expectation. The organization is friendly, helpful and approachable. They want you to succeed too!

Accreditation will improve the quality of your program and is worth all the hard work ahead of you. An accredited program is well respected in the community, in the hospital settings, clinical sites and by the fire services. Results of annual surveys reveal that our graduates are consistently recognized as being more prepared to work independently in the clinical and field setting as well as upon completion of the program.

In summary, accreditation can enhance the integrity of a medical center based paramedic program, building the reputation that such programs are held to a higher standard.

Best Wishes!

Lauri Beechler RN, MSN, CEN, PHRN, NREMT-B
*Loyola University Medical Center
Chicago, IL*



I was initially leery of the accreditation process. I had been through accreditation processes before in a prior self-owned business and as a supervisor in a manufacturing company years ago. Those experiences didn't endear me to "experts" telling me how to conduct business. Or requiring me to spend money on a certificate that wouldn't necessarily bring in extra clients. What would we really gain by the piece of paper we would get and how much time and money would we waste on it when we could be in the classroom instead? This would also be the third time that our department had started the accreditation process. It didn't look particularly exciting to me.

Now, looking back, I would have to admit that the process was well worth the effort and the expense.

Accreditation helped us identify areas of growth and need. This is probably the greatest benefit that I perceive in the accreditation process. Without a good look in the mirror, no person or department can move forward. CoAEMSP doesn't require that you change your program to a rigid standard. Rather, it provides a tool, in the self-study, which helps to identify gaps in your processes for you to improve upon. As we spent time writing the documents, forming the reports and digging for the information necessary to complete it, we were often struck with ideas for new ways of doing things. We used it as an opportunity to brainstorm and re-invent aspects of the program, rather than as a drudgery and necessary evil requiring "more meetings". We probably could have finished the self study in less time, but found ourselves getting side-tracked into "hey, let's try this..." or, "we could add this..." types of discussions.

I enjoyed the site visit. Both visitors were friendly and non-judgmental. They followed their process, but also provided useful feedback about our program. They seemed to learn as much from us as we did from them and seemed to enjoy the exchange of ideas. The visit didn't feel like a testing situation, but more like mentors dropping by to see how we were doing.

Accreditation will soon be required for students to take the National Registry certification exams. This change is long overdue. Hopefully, with the new national standards being enacted, more states will join in requiring accredited schools for their paramedics. Then we can finally start standardizing the field across state boundaries. Because EMS is one of the few allied health care professions that does not require its educational programs to be accredited, this is a good step towards getting the recognition that our profession deserves.

In the end, accreditation can only bring good things to the education of our students and, ultimately, our profession.

Ron R. Lawler, AAS, NREMT-P

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National EMS Academy

Dr. George Hatch, LP, EMTP
Executive Director
CoAEMSP
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Dear Dr. Hatch,

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank CoAEMSP for the guidance and support we received as we completed the self study and site visit. The accreditation process was challenging to say the least especially since we have over 30 employees that utilize a distance learning system to connect our 7 training sites in Louisiana and 1 in Southeast Texas. The first step of completing the self study was something that I was familiar with, but relatively new for those that I work with. The self study was a great tool that helped us work on areas of our program that were weak. For example, we put together a plan to have medical directors at each of our sites as opposed to a medical director for every 2 sites. This was easy to accomplish with the financial support of South Louisiana Community College who we partnered with during the development of the paramedic program.

Another helpful tool for us was the executive summary that was sent to us after you reviewed the self study. After seeing your comments, we were able to focus on areas that you felt may or may not meet the standards and guidelines. This helped me directly because your comments provided me the necessary information to go to our Board of Directors and ask for an additional faculty member to help with teaching. This has freed me up to focus my attention on administrative duties that I wasn't able to complete because of my teaching load.

Finally, your team was thorough, fair, and made our entire staff of instructors feel relaxed during our site visit. I especially was very thankful for your help when both you and Randy Kuykendall helped me and Acadian Ambulance paramedics extricate 2 potentially critical patients from an auto accident that we came across. It was great to see that we all still had it in us.

Our experience with accreditation was wonderful. It helped us build a better program which will in turn build better paramedics. We were also able to strengthen our relationship with South Louisiana Community College. We all recently received faculty status with the college and lead faculty now receive a stipend directly from the college every semester they teach. Thanks again for your help. We proudly display our accreditation certificate for all to see.

Sincerely,

Greg Mullen, MS, NREMT-P
EMS Program Manager

The National EMS Academy is an educational partnership between South Louisiana Community College and Acadian Ambulance Service.



May 5, 2010

In 2001 our program first started exploring the possibilities of going through the accreditation process. The evaluation process was both intriguing and intimidating. Once we started through the process it became a very useful tool for self-evaluation and great way to see the areas we needed to improve. This was a timely process but by 2003 our self-study was complete and we survived the site visit. I was frankly nervous, however, our two visitors, Dr. Dan Storer and Clark Christensen, were fantastic! It was quickly apparent the intent of the visitors was to assist you with the accreditation process and help you understand the standards. Also, offer suggestions on ways to meet or even exceed the standards. Now, having been through a second site visit and having a very similar experience, the site visit is something I look forward to and am anxiously awaiting our next visit. Also, as a site visitor myself, I have tried to settle the nervousness, the anxiousness and fear of the site visit prior to arriving. Then during the visit it is one of sharing information and an educational experience. Any program that is considering accreditation should be excited about this process as it gives them a good tool for self-evaluation and improvement.

Another area of concern is expense in the initial and annual costs. Frankly, it is well worth the money and it is a cost of doing business. By the time you look at the hours spent by the student to what it costs, it is less \$0.10 cents per hour. The benefit for the student is immense as they have now graduated from a CAAHEP approved course within the Allied Health Community and it validates their education. So, further in their careers it will benefit.

The requirement for accreditation is welcomed by most within the EMS Educational field as we recognize the need for accreditation for alliance with Allied Health. The requirement is nothing that should be startling as EMS is one of the few health care professions without program accreditation and for our profession to grow it is absolutely needed.

Overall, the experience of becoming accredited and maintaining accreditation has been extremely positive. Our program has improved by complying with the standards, strengthened areas that needed attention and overall, satisfaction of the students has improved since. This can only be from the changes made due to this process. We have had several students comment that they selected our program because we were accredited. One other thought, while accreditation is only available at the paramedic level currently, the concepts, standards and process can be applied to all EMS programs. Our department is working towards having all levels from EMR through paramedic comply with the accreditation standards.

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