



## ACCREDITATION IS CREDIBLE EDUCATION

### WHAT IS THE ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE?

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.

Presently, EMS is the only health care profession that does not require new entrants to have graduated from a nationally accredited education program. Page 28 of *The EMS Education Agenda for the Future* recommends a "single, nationally recognized accreditation agency."

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.



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### ABOUT THE COAEMSP

CoAEMSP, under the auspices of CAAHEP, is the national EMS education accreditation agency, as defined in the *EMS Education Agenda for the Future*. CoAEMSP strives to continuously improve the quality of EMS education through accreditation and recognition services for the full range of EMS professions. 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 EMTs (NAEMT)
- National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)
- National Registry of EMTs (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.

It is important to understand the relationship between the CoAEMSP and the state EMS office. 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 accreditation process is not designed to be punitive and is not an enforcement tool. The accreditation 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.



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### **The Relationship between the CoAEMSP and CAAHEP**

The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (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) allied health sciences field, including emergency medical services, anesthesiologist assistant, cardiovascular technology, diagnostic medical sonography, exercise physiology, exercise science, medical assisting, perfusion, surgical technology, and more. The CoAEMSP is one of the Committees on Accreditation. CAAHEP awards accreditation to Paramedic education programs based on the review and recommendation of the CoAEMSP.

CAAHEP is recognized by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and is a member of the Association of Specialized & Professional Accreditors (ASPA).

CoAEMSP examines a specific course of study within an educational institution. Programmatic accreditation is most often used to evaluate the education necessary for individuals to enter into a profession. The standards for programmatic accreditation are primarily developed by the profession and reflect what a person needs to know to function successfully within that profession. In contrast, institutional accreditation (including regional, faith-based, and private career accrediting organizations) focuses on broad educational infrastructure issues such as admissions, financial aid, safety, dormitories, libraries, athletics, records, student and advising counseling, faculty appointment/promotion/tenure, etc.

### **Benefits of Accreditation of Paramedic Educational Programs**

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

- Marketing
- Outside quality improvement
- Maintaining curriculum currency
- Ability for graduates to sit for certification/licensure exams
- Ability for graduates to obtain employment

.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



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### FAQs

**Q: What is accreditation and why is it important?**

**A:** Broadly speaking, 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 process to become accredited?**

**A:** Here are the steps to take to begin the accreditation process:

1. Program submits a completed [CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services](#).
2. Program submits the Self Study Report and fees to CoAEMSP.
3. CoAEMSP conducts an executive analysis for the Self Study Report and provides immediate feedback to the Program.
4. Program hosts a site visit.
5. CoAEMSP provides the Program a report of the site visit findings.
6. Program responds to the findings.
7. CoAEMSP Board reviews the Program's Self Study Report, site visit findings, and the Program's response to the findings and formulates an accreditation recommendation to CAAHEP.
8. The CAAHEP Board reviews and votes on recommendations from CoAEMSP.
9. CAAHEP notifies the Program of its accreditation status.



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

**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:** Each application for accreditation receives individual attention by CoAEMSP and the timeframe varies. 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.



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It is important to put these costs in context over a 5-year period. If your program serves 25 paramedic students per year x 5 years (125 students), the total cost for accreditation services would be:

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Annual Fee (\$1,200.00 X 5 years)                | \$ 6,000.00     |
| CAAHEP Institutional Fee (\$450.00 X 5 years)    | 2,250.00        |
| Technology Fee (paid only once)                  | 250.00          |
| Site Visit every fifth year                      | 2,500.00        |
| Self Study review every fifth year               | 500.00          |
| Total  | 11,500.00       |
| Cost per student over five (5) years             | 92.00           |
| <b>Average cost per student per contact hour</b> | <b>\$ 0.084</b> |

**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 here in the 'Becoming Accredited' section.

**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:



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- 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: Our program does not meet any of the current sponsorship requirements. Are there any options available to continue our Paramedic education program?**

**A:** Yes. The *Standards and Guidelines* permit the development of a CONSORTIUM. The Consortium allows a minimum of two (2) or more members, with an interest in operating an educational program to work together to meet the needs of their community.

At least one (1) member MUST meet the requirements of Sponsorship as defined by the *Standards and Guidelines*. The CoAEMSP provides a template for the Consortium which *defines the roles and responsibilities of each member including governance and lines of authority*. See the previous question for a more detailed explanation of a Consortium.

**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.



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### STEPS IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

#### Step 1

File a request for accreditation services, signed by your sponsor institution's CEO. This form is available on the CAAHEP website at [www.caahep.org/Accreditation-Services-Application/default.aspx](http://www.caahep.org/Accreditation-Services-Application/default.aspx) 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

Familiarize yourself with the resources available on [www.coaemsp.org](http://www.coaemsp.org), including the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*, sample completed accreditation documents, the Site Visit Report, and the Standards Interpretations.

Familiarize yourself 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

Download the Initial Self Study Report (ISSR) forms at [www.coaemsp.org/Becoming\\_Accredited.htm](http://www.coaemsp.org/Becoming_Accredited.htm).

#### Step 4

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

#### Step 5

Submit 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.



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### **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.



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### RESOURCES

**Accreditation Workshops.** 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 at [www.naemse.org/accreditation](http://www.naemse.org/accreditation).

**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. For a current list of webinars, visit [www.coaemsp.org](http://www.coaemsp.org).

**Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions- ASAHP.** ASAHP represents four year institutions on the CAAHEP Board of Directors. [www.asahp.org](http://www.asahp.org)

**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. [www.caahep.org](http://www.caahep.org)  
[www.youraccreditationmentor.com](http://www.youraccreditationmentor.com)

**Council for Higher Education- CHEA.** CHEA is the "accreditor" of CAAHEP. [www.chea.org/](http://www.chea.org/)

**Health Resources and Services Administration- HRSA.** HRSA has provided CAAHEP with a contract to address emergency preparedness in the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*. [www.hrsa.gov/](http://www.hrsa.gov/)

**National Network of Health Career Programs in Two Year Colleges- NN2.** NN2 represents two year institutions on the CAAHEP Board of Directors. [www.nn2.org/](http://www.nn2.org/)

**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. [www.ed.gov/](http://www.ed.gov/)