

Revision of the National EMS Education Standards

Frequently Asked Questions – February 17, 2020

What is the goal of the EMS Education Standards Revision Project?

First released in 2009, the National EMS Education Standards have helped educators, certifying bodies, and regulators ensure that EMS clinicians at all levels receive an education that prepares them to perform to the best of their abilities. Now more than a decade old, the National EMS Education Standards require an update to ensure that the education of new EMS clinicians is in line with the recently released 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model, which reflects current evidence-based medicine and best practices in prehospital care.

The revised EMS Education Standards will define the competencies, clinical behaviors, and judgments that entry-level EMS personnel must have to meet practice guidelines defined in the updated EMS Scope of Practice Model. As the revised standards will address minimum competency levels, EMS education programs should continue to educate beyond the standards to meet local community needs or requests from local stakeholders.

Like the 2009 edition, these EMS Education Standards will address the four national levels of EMS certification defined by the EMS Education Agenda for the Future: Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) and Paramedic. They will not include requirements for specialty certification education (e.g. critical care, community paramedicine, tactical EMS), CE requirements, nor will they address degree requirements or the nomenclature of EMS clinicians. (Note: For the purposes of this project, as a group the four levels are referred to as EMS clinicians.)

What is the process for updating the EMS Education Standards? Who is involved?

The National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) is leading the revision of the Education Standards and has put in place a project development team with numerous experienced and well-credentialed EMS educators and physician advisors. Funding for this effort is provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Office of EMS and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau's EMS for Children (EMSC) Program.

This group of EMS education experts, led by co-chairs Paul Rosenberger, MPA, EdD, NRP, and Art Hsieh, MA, NRP, is convening to write the new EMS Education Standards, with multiple opportunities for collaboration and input from both the national EMS community and the public. This well-rounded and diverse team is composed of fire-based EMS educators, college-based EMS educators, hospital-based EMS educators and a State official. In addition, urban, suburban, and rural/frontier geography are represented and physician advisors have been engaged to provide input to the content as well.

The development of the new standards includes multiple opportunities for input from the public and stakeholder organizations, including two public comment periods. The project also aims to update the EMS Instructional Guidelines for all four levels of EMS certification (EMR, EMT,

AEMT and Paramedic). All members of the EMS community and the public are encouraged to provide feedback on the drafts.

At multiple phases throughout the process, liaisons for the national EMS stakeholder organizations will be asked to provide input and participate in the development process.

How will I have an opportunity to provide feedback or input during this process?

The National EMS Education Standards project development team not only looks forward to stakeholder organization and community input, but strongly encourages it. A public comment period was held after release of the first draft of the standards and many substantive and helpful comments were received. A second public comment period is planned for February 2020. Drafts of the revised standards have also been shared with national organizations, as well as via EMS media and social media channels, and announced through the NHTSA Office of EMS email announcements. The project development team reviews all comments and takes them into consideration as the updated standards are finalized.

You can follow the project's progress online at [EMS.gov](https://www.ems.gov) and [sign up here to receive updates](#) on this and other projects, including announcements when drafts are released for public comment.

What is the time frame for finalizing the updated EMS Education Standards?

The Development Team met for the first time in May 2019 to organize and assess the scope of the project. The first working draft of the revised Education Standards was released for public review and comment later in 2019. A second draft, based on EMS community input, will be released for review February 2020. The final National EMS Education Standards are expected to be published in the summer of 2020 and will be available on EMS.gov. Throughout the project time frame, the project development team is soliciting feedback and input from EMS organizations, the EMS community and the public.

What is the difference between the Education Standards, Instructional Guidelines, and Curriculum?

Education standards are learning goals, a common set of expectations, or a description of desired knowledge that apprentices should possess at critical points in their educational careers. They have common attributes, including defined subject areas, learning progression and educational goals, and do not describe any teaching practice or assessment method. These differ from an **education curriculum**, which is a detailed plan for day-to-day instruction and assessment.

The content of educational standards can be general or prescriptive in nature.

Non-Prescriptive Educational Standards

- increased teacher autonomy
- increased instructional flexibility
- increased responsiveness to student learning needs

- increased responsiveness to local needs and situations

Prescriptive Educational Standards

- improved educational consistency
- protection from societal harm that may result from low educational expectations and/or low-quality instruction
- have been labelled as “burdensome checklists” by some educators and can be problematic in medicine due to rapid changes in technology, scientific evidence, and best practices

The EMS Education Standards are intended to be largely non-prescriptive, to allow the benefits listed above and prevent them from becoming quickly out-of-date, as they are anticipated to be in place for five years or longer.

Local EMS educators and the local community select or create curricula based on regional needs, accreditation standards and State and local policies and regulations. Curricular content and learning processes should be resolved at the local level through implementation and feedback. Decisions on curriculum implementation are based on local situations, students’ needs, and available resources.

The related ***instructional guidelines*** were not considered part of the original National EMS Education Standards, but are a companion document. They provide guidance to instructors, regulators and publishers regarding the content that may be included within each area of the standards. The original instructional guidelines were not intended to be all-inclusive; they do not comprise a curriculum and they were not intended to be adopted by States.

What are the differences between the four Scope of Practice domains: Education, Certification, Licensure and Credentialing?

The 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model addresses “Professional Scope of Practice” and provides a framework for the differences between education, certification, licensure and credentialing. The four domains are clearly defined and explained in the document as noted below.

Education Domain	Includes all of the didactic, psychomotor, and affective learning that an entry-level EMS learner should be taught during an EMS course.
Certification Domain	An external evaluation and verification process that is conducted to ensure that a learner has achieved competency to be safe and effective when conducting their duties as an EMS clinician. The certification domain is performed by NREMT in most States.
Licensure Domain	The legal authority, granted by a State to an individual, to perform certain restricted duties. The clinical duties can vary from one State to the next. Often this domain is referred to as “certification,” but the Scope of Practice Model defines certification differently. As defined in the 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model, certification and licensure are separate and distinct processes.

Credentialing Domain	A responsibility of the local and/or organizational EMS medical director and the EMS agency. Being that a learner has been educated, certified, and licensed at an entry-level, the duty falls to the local community to ensure that the EMS clinician is able to operate safely by following appropriate clinical guidelines, set forth by the physician EMS medical director.
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Because most EMS education programs teach students who will practice in different organizations, communities or even States, a one-size-fits-all education is not possible. No institution is able to teach a learner every possible clinical or operational guideline, nor can an educational entity train an individual on every device used by EMS services across the nation. During the public comment period for the Education Standards revision, many commenters suggested a need to educate EMS students about the use of portable technologies and other unique subjects, such as ultrasound devices. The 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model, on which the Education Standards revision is based, does not include portable technologies other than to identify them as a credentialing responsibility.

What is the history of Education Standards in EMS? Why are we revising them now?

In the early 1970s – at the advent of today’s EMS systems – few standards existed to define the scope of practice and education of EMS practitioners. But as the profession evolved, so did education. By the end of the decade, national standard curricula for EMTs and paramedics were developed and published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). These curricula were updated and revised throughout the 1980s and ‘90s, clearly spelling out exactly what should be taught to new EMS practitioners.

In 1996, the *EMS Agenda for the Future* was released. This consensus document was developed with funding from NHTSA and the Health Resources and Services Administration (home of the EMS for Children program). The National Association of EMS Physicians and the National Association of State EMS Directors led this process, which involved several stakeholders. Overall, the *Agenda* proposed five different components to the system, including the National EMS Scope of Practice Model: a description of the entry-level knowledge and skills for each provider level (Emergency Medical Responder, Emergency Medical Technician, Advanced EMT and Paramedic) and the National EMS Education Standards.

In 2000, NHTSA published the *EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach*, which outlined a vision for the future of EMS education that is based on sound education principles and research and led by qualified instructors. In December of 2000, representatives of 30 EMS-related organizations met at an EMS Education Conference sponsored by NHTSA to identify the necessary steps for implementing that vision. Over the next decade, the EMS community – with the support of NHTSA, HRSA and their Federal partners – developed several landmark documents that have shaped EMS education and the profession as a whole, including the National EMS Scope of Practice Model and, in 2009, the original National EMS Education Standards.

Why are there National EMS Education Standards when EMS is regulated at the State level?

While the federal government is funding the revision of the National EMS Education Standards, which are truly national in scope, the regulatory authority to oversee EMS practice remains with the States. The EMS Education Standards have been used to develop curricula at both state and national levels. Having a process that brings experts and stakeholders together at the national level ensures that States, educators, and others have a consensus- and evidence-based resource that supports efforts to educate EMS practitioners. This process also helps create a level of consistency across the nation while still allowing States and local communities to meet the specific needs of their agencies and communities.

How does this revision of the guidelines relate to the recently released 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model?

The recently released 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model assembled experts to evaluate the scope of EMS practice for each of the four national practitioner levels (EMR, EMT, AEMT and Paramedic). They evaluated and determined what each level can and should be doing within the scope of their job definition. The Scope of Practice will be the launching pad and guide for the project. The EMS Education Standards must now be revised to reflect any changes in the National EMS Scope of Practice Model, to ensure practitioners receive the education and training they need to perform within their scopes and serve their patients and communities. The revision of the National EMS Scope of Practice Model and National EMS Education Standards are naturally interrelated, as one informs the other.

How will updating the National EMS Education Standards impact the profession's ability to attract, educate and retain available talent in the workforce?

It's important to remember that the project development team is updating the Education Standards based on public comment, stakeholder input, the 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model, evidence-based medicine and new and emerging technologies. The goal of the project is to align EMS education with the needs of patients and the newly revised Scope of Practice Model, not to completely overhaul the Education Standards or to make the education of EMS practitioners burdensome. The expert panel responsible for recommending revisions to the standards is composed of EMS educators with diverse and extensive backgrounds. In addition, this panel will regularly solicit and consider all feedback and public comment received during this collaborative process.

What is the relationship between the EMS Education Standards and the National Registry's practice analysis?

Several members of the EMS Education Standards Development Team are involved in the NREMT's practice analysis working group. In addition, the project development team has reached out to NREMT to be sure input and feedback has been received throughout the development of the revised standards. The practice analysis has been one of several critical resources consulted by the Development Team.

How will the new EMS Education Standards impact textbooks and other educational materials? How long will it take before these materials reflect the revised standards?

The 2009 National EMS Education Standards are still being used by EMS education institutions and textbook publishers. The new Education Standards will be complete in 2020. Publishers, authors, and educators can then choose to update materials to reflect both the 2019 National EMS Scope of Practice Model and the revised EMS Education Standards.

In the future, how frequently should updates to the National EMS Education Standards occur?

This is a topic that the project development team will discuss with the entire EMS community throughout the process. With the rapid pace of change in science, technology and other factors, it is likely that revisions should and will be made more frequently in the future.