

# What You Need to Know in 2012 (and Beyond) About Selecting a Paramedic Program

Program accreditation is designed to support a philosophy of on-going improvements within a program that will ensure the highest quality education for EMS professionals throughout the country. The *EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach* calls for “A single national accreditation agency... identified and accepted by state regulatory offices” and **certification based upon successful completion of a nationally accredited program of instruction**. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is the largest programmatic accreditor in the allied health sciences field. Currently, the only nationally recognized accreditation available for EMS education is through CAAHEP’s Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP). Although CAAHEP is the actual accrediting agency, the CoAEMSP has been representing the EMS profession since the Paramedic was recognized as an allied health occupation by the American Medical Association in 1975. There are two basic types of educational accreditation, one identified as “institutional” and one referred to as “specialized” or “programmatic.” Institutional accreditation normally applies to an entire institution, indicating that each of an institution’s parts is contributing to the achievement of the institution’s objectives, although not necessarily all at the same level of quality. Specialized/programmatic accreditation normally applies to the evaluation of programs, departments, or schools which usually are parts of a total collegiate or other postsecondary institution. The *Education Agenda’s* goal for national EMS certification is based on programmatic accreditation and will become operational January 1, 2013, when nearly 3/4 of states and US territories will require that paramedic programs be nationally accredited and the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) implements programmatic accreditation as an eligibility requirement for National EMS Certification at the paramedic level.

## So what does this mean to you?

- ◆ National EMS Program Accreditation is the FUTURE of paramedic education and a way to enhance the profession by bringing EMS to an educational par with other allied health professions.
- ◆ Graduates from CAAHEP accredited EMS program are ensured continued access to the national EMS certification process and enhanced mobility (i.e. reciprocity) among states that will require programmatic accreditation by the end of 2012.
- ◆ Graduates from programs not accredited by CAAHEP in states that have not implemented national EMS program accreditation by the end of 2012 will become eligible for that state’s certification/licensure ONLY. In other words, they will be permanently ineligible for national certification at the paramedic level
- ◆ Graduates from programs not accredited by CAAHEP in states that have not implemented national EMS program accreditation by the end of 2012 will become severely limited in their ability to apply for reciprocity in most states.

**After January 1, 2013, only graduates of CAAHEP accredited programs as well as graduates of programs holding a CoAEMSP LoR will be eligible for national EMS certification at the paramedic level. Verify the current accreditation status of any EMS program at [www.caahep.org](http://www.caahep.org) under the “Find an Accredited Program” tab!**

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The *Education Agenda* was developed through a consensus process with input from national EMS stakeholders including national EMS organizations, and many individuals and practitioners. The following chart outlines the rationale for EMS community support for the CAAHEP process and the CoAEMSP.

WHAT THE EMS EDUCATION AGENDA SAYS	COMPLIANCE INDICATORS
A single national accreditation agency will be identified and accepted by state regulatory offices.	Currently, CoAEMSP is the <u>only</u> organization with standards and guidelines specific to EMS programs that has completed the CAAHEP process to be recognized as an accreditation agency.
This accrediting agency will have a board of directors with representation from a broad range of EMS organizations.	<p>CoAEMSP member organizations include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)</li> <li>American Ambulance Association (AAA)</li> <li>American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA)</li> <li>American College of Cardiology (ACC)</li> <li>American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)</li> <li>American College of Osteopathic Emergency Physicians (ACOEP)</li> <li>American College of Surgeons (ACS)</li> <li>International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)</li> <li>International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)</li> <li>National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE)</li> <li>National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT)</li> <li>National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP)</li> <li>National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)</li> <li>National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)</li> </ul>
The accreditation agency will develop standards and guidelines for all levels of EMS education with broad community input. All EMS accreditation will include self-study, site visitation, and commission review, but the standards and guidelines vary according to level.	CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines are available at <a href="http://www.coaemsp.org">www.coaemsp.org</a>
The accreditation agency will adopt the National EMS Education Standards as the basis for evaluating the content of all EMS instruction and will develop a process for accreditation that is appropriate for each level of EMS instruction as determined by the National EMS Scope of Practice Model.	CoAEMSP Policies and Procedures are available at <a href="http://www.coaemsp.org">www.coaemsp.org</a> .
Accreditation will be achieved by a process as close to other allied health occupations accreditation as possible, given the resources and constraints imposed by the system.	<p>The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) is the largest medical accrediting agency in the US and representatives of ALL medical specialties and organizations serve on its Board. CAAHEP is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). It is a non-profit, non-governmental agency, which reviews and accredits over 2100 educational programs in twenty two allied health science occupations. There are currently 22 Committees on Accreditation in the nation. Accreditation is granted to EMS education programs through the review and recommendation of CAAHEP's Committee on Accreditation for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP).</p>