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Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health

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CC: Executive Director Tré Rodriguez, National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT)
Executive Director Dia Gainor, National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO)
Executive Director George Hatch, Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the
Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP)
Massachusetts Office of Emergency Medical Services Strategic Planning Task Force

FROM: Jamie Pianka, Director, OEMS
Madeleine Biondolillo MD, Director, Bureau of Healthcare Safety & Quality
Iyah Romm, Special Advisor, Office of the Commissioner

DATE: April 29, 2013

RE: Massachusetts EMS and the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
(with clerical edits for posting)

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) has been working in collaboration with leaders from the EMS community for over eighteen months to develop a strategic plan for EMS in Massachusetts. This Strategic Planning Task Force was convened in late 2011 to identify several high level priorities for EMS delivery in the Commonwealth. The Task Force included physicians, EMS service directors, training institutions, regional EMS councils, and representatives from the fire services. Although many of these recommendations originated from the EMS community, the implications for improvement are bold and these strategies will require broad support for a successful transition.

One of the recommendations of the Task Force included the adoption of national standards for EMS certification and entails a transition back to the use of National EMS Certification offered by the National Registry for Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) as the basis for Massachusetts EMT certification. Massachusetts is one of only four states that currently do not recognize this national certification standard. Adopting the National Registry and adhering to other national training guidelines, as part of the National EMS Education Agenda, establishes uniform standards for minimum entry-level competency. It verifies for services, medical direction physicians and EMS coordinators that all Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) entering the system have met these standards.

IMPLICATIONS

National EMS Certification

Effective July 1, 2013, all *new* Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) candidates will be required to participate in the NREMT certification process for both psychomotor and cognitive skills evaluation.

NREMT Registration

There will be four identified tracks, which Massachusetts EMTs can choose to follow once Massachusetts recognizes this certification standard.

1. All new EMT candidates requesting initial licensure after July 1, 2013 will be required to enter the NREMT Registry and maintain NREMT certification throughout their career as part of their Massachusetts licensure.
2. All existing Massachusetts-licensed EMTs who have current NREMT certification will be required to maintain their Registry certification as part of their Massachusetts licensure.
3. All EMS providers who were formerly registered by the NREMT, but have not maintained their NREMT certification will be able to have their certification reinstated, if currently licensed by Massachusetts OEMS without restrictions.. Those who have already successfully tested into the registry will **not** be required to test again.
4. EMTs that have never registered with the NREMT will be able to maintain their Massachusetts licensure, without NREMT certification, provided that they meet or exceed NREMT recertification training requirements and fulfill continuing education credits. There will be a \$5 premium for individuals in this category.

CAAHEP (CoAEMSP) Accreditation

Historically, OEMS has maintained a separate accreditation process for training institutions that does not meet national certification standards. Moving forward, the effect of maintaining this alternate approach is that most Massachusetts-trained paramedics would not be able to gain reciprocity. In order to practice in any of the 46 NREMT states or federal agencies, these paramedics would have to undergo extensive retraining.

Effective January 1, 2013, National Registry standards mandated that all EMS initial paramedic education institutions must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), upon the recommendation of the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP), and, therefore, no longer accept individual state-specific training curricula. This move by the NREMT is supported by the National Association of State EMS Officials (NASEMSO) and ensures that training institutions are capable of managing student development and assure

standardized training across the nation. Moreover, this change in policy will allow all Massachusetts paramedic candidates who have graduated from CoAEMSP-accredited institutions to join the NREMT and, consequently, be eligible to work as paramedics in other states in the future, or during times of emergency.

Continuing-Education Credit Tracking

OEMS will offer a streamlined continuing education (con-ed) tracking process through the NREMT's web-based system where Massachusetts EMTs can create a profile and manage their continuing education requirements for state certification, regardless of whether or not they have National Registry Status. The NREMT data system will serve as the sole system for tracking the continuing education credits of all EMTs, and will be transitioned in during the next two certification cycles. This approach will eliminate redundancy, ensure access to education for Massachusetts EMTs, facilitate the detection of training fraud, and strengthen physician involvement in paramedic training.

CHALLENGES

Massachusetts has chosen to adopt the use of National EMS Certification by the NREMT and adhere to national standards as part of a greater effort to increase training access and availability for EMS providers through enhanced systems and fewer regulatory burdens. Our goal is to take an essential first step towards improving the Commonwealth's EMS systems and will provide additional stability and portability to our EMS workforce.

Although there are many benefits to adopting these national training standards, doing so successfully requires the modification of our statewide EMS infrastructure and requires support from our workforce. While future EMT candidates will be most affected by this change, the costs associated with ensuring that education and competency adhere to national standards will be shared by many.

The current fee for NREMT recertification is \$15 for EMTs and \$20 for Paramedics per each two-year certification cycle, which represents a new fee to the EMS workforce in Massachusetts. There are several payment models in Massachusetts and this cost will be shared by providers, ambulance services, and municipalities.

The existing state training and testing infrastructure inhibits the universal adoption of NREMT and therefore would not be able to support this transition. Efforts to assist training institutions, EMTs, ambulance services, and fire departments during this time are currently underway, along with several other quality improvement initiatives. Accomplishing these initiatives will require ongoing policy review as well as the cooperation and improved relationships of all stakeholders and participants in the EMS/healthcare theatre.

COMMUNICATION

The Department will be working over the next several months to ensure comprehensive communications with stakeholders and the EMS community. We will provide outreach and opportunities for further discussion, and to answer the many questions related to this and other important OEMS initiatives.

We appreciate your organization's support and your engagement in this comprehensive improvement process.