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TO: MA Accredited EMT Training Institutions, Non-accredited Training Providers, Licensed Ambulance Services and Chief Examiners
CC: EMCAB Members
FROM: W. Scott Cluett III, Director, OEMS
DATE: May 23, 2020, updated September 16, 2020
RE: Partial Lifting of In-Person EMS Course and Psychomotor Exam Suspensions

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (Department) continues to work with federal, state and local partners on the outbreak of novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19), caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, and we continue to appreciate the essential role you have in responding to this evolving situation.

In response to the Governor's declared state of emergency, and subsequent orders on social distancing and restricting gatherings, especially indoors, the Department is allowing EMS training activities – both initial and continuing education – and certification psychomotor exams to take place, but only in accordance with the precautions set out below, to keep EMS personnel safe from exposure.

EMS Training: Effective immediately, Department-accredited EMS training institutions (ATIs) and non-accredited training providers (collectively, "training providers") may operate EMT and Paramedic courses, as long as they can do so in accordance with the requirements below, which are based on current Department and U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Social Distancing guidelines, until the Governor's declared state of emergency is terminated.

During the declared state of emergency, for all EMS courses held in Massachusetts, whether initial or continuing education, all EMS training providers must comply with the following requirements:

- Individuals who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the CDC (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home and not participate in training at course sites.
- **All didactic content shall be delivered using distributive, or virtual instructor led methods, to decrease the time students are in contact with others. The Department will not approve any in-person didactic continuing education courses.**
- For hands-on and lab components of courses, training providers must implement a symptom-monitoring program, to include:
 - Before entering the facility daily, the training provider must document symptom checks for all instructors, students and staff on site, which should include queries

about exposure risk to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients, presence of symptoms, and presence of fever of 100.4° F or greater.

- Use CDC guidance for risk assessment for healthcare providers, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>.
- If any instructors, students or staff present with a fever, or any symptoms, they must be excluded from the premises.
- Training providers must provide education to all instructors, students and staff on the donning, use, and doffing of protective personal equipment (PPE).
- Training providers must limit groups of students and staff within a room to no more than 10 individuals total, and distance individuals at least 6 feet apart, as training duties permit.
- All instructors, students and staff must wash their hands immediately upon entering the training site, upon donning or doffing PPE, and frequently throughout their stay. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used when handwashing facilities are not available
- All instructors, students and staff must wear surgical masks at all times when at the training site.
- All students must wear non-latex procedure gloves and eye protection at all times when performing psychomotor skills, including patient assessment.
- Training providers must thoroughly clean and decontaminate all spaces and equipment used on a regular basis (at least daily), using EPA-registered agents.

Training providers should source their PPE in a way so as not to reduce the available stock for health care entities, including ambulance services.

Psychomotor Exams: Effective immediately, in accordance with the requirements below, and subject to approval from the Department, psychomotor examinations may be performed.

ATIs that sponsor and conduct psychomotor examinations during the declared state of emergency (exam sponsors) must comply with the following requirements:

- Individuals who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 according to the CDC (e.g., due to age or underlying conditions) are encouraged to stay home and not participate in EMS psychomotor exams.
- Exam sponsors must review current Department and CDC guidelines for social distancing, and develop a written plan to be submitted to the assigned Chief Examiner and the Department for approval, prior to exam confirmation. This plan must detail how the exam sponsor will meet all the requirements of this Advisory, including compliance with symptom checks, PPE (including sourcing and training on use), availability of handwashing, site layout with room sizes and locations, and documentation of contact tracing.
- Exam location must allow for multiple large rooms for student gathering, stations and examiner holding, to allow for social distancing spacing of all participants in accordance with Department and CDC guidance. The exam location must accommodate limiting groups of candidates and examination staff within a room to no more than 10 individuals

total, and distancing individuals at least 6 feet apart, as examination duties permit. Exam sponsors must work with their assigned Chief Examiner, to review site requirements and gain the Chief Examiner's approval of the safe suitability of the site for its use.

- Exam sponsors must implement a symptom-monitoring program, to include:
 - Before entering the facility daily, the sponsor must document symptom checks for all Examiners, candidates and staff on site, which should include queries about exposure risk to COVID-19 patients, presence of symptoms, and presence or absence of fever.
 - Use CDC guidance for risk assessment for healthcare providers, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>.
 - If any Examiners, candidates or staff present with a fever, or any symptoms, they must be excluded from the premises.
- Exam sponsors must provide education to all examiners, candidates and staff on the donning, use, and doffing of protective personal equipment (PPE).
- All Examiners, candidates and staff must wash their hands immediately upon entering the exam site, upon donning and doffing any PPE, and frequently throughout their stay.
- All Examiners, candidates and staff must wear surgical masks at all times when at the exam site.
- All candidates must wear non-latex procedure gloves at all times when performing psychomotor skills.
- When performing assessments or skills involving or near mucous membranes (including eyes, nose, mouth, etc.), students must wear eye protection.
- Exam sponsors must thoroughly decontaminate all spaces and equipment used on a regular basis (at least daily), using EPA-registered agents.

While Chief Examiners may make modifications to the psychomotor examination format, by staggering candidates or decreasing the number of candidates at a given time, the substance of the exam, including station content and evaluation criteria, must remain in accordance with current Department standards.

Thank you all for your patience and flexibility. For any questions, please contact Susan Lewis, NRP/IC, Deputy Director, at Susan.K.Lewis@mass.gov.