



May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**MEMORANDUM**

## **Massachusetts Transition to National EMS Scope of Practice and the NREMT**

Dear EMS Leadership,

Massachusetts EMS is going through many changes. Some of these changes are in response to the changing demands of EMS in the Commonwealth, while others reflect national developments. I would like to reinforce our commitment to assisting providers in successfully navigating these many adjustments. As always, we are committed to working with EMS providers (fulltime and volunteer), firefighters, educators, physicians, nurses and the many other professionals who interact in our statewide EMS system.

There are two significant changes that need to be clarified: One is our transition to the National EMS Scope of Practice and the other is the adoption of the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) as the basis for Massachusetts EMT certification and recertification at all levels. These two changes (and the reasoning behind supporting them) are independent of one another. While many EMS providers statewide are now familiar with the Commonwealth's adoption of the NREMT, there is still wide confusion regarding transition to meet the new National EMS Scope of Practice.

### **National Scope of Practice (Transition)**

In 2007, the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released the EMS Education Agenda for the Future. This document was the result of several years of research, outreach, and revisions, and represents the collective vision for where EMS education should be across the nation. The Task force that contributed to it was comprised of a diverse group of representatives from NHTSA, U.S. Health & Human Services, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Firefighters, the American College of Surgeons, the American College of Emergency Physicians, the American Ambulance Association, the National Association of State EMS Officials, EMS for Children, the National Association of EMTs, and the National Registry of EMTs and many others. Rarely has such a diverse but representative group of EMS leadership gathered and collectively supported such a report. The National EMS Scope of Practice was one element that was developed in this Agenda, and a recommendation that all of these entities supported.

The National EMS Scope of Practice reflects the changing demands of EMS across our nation. The new standards are meant to provide not only a higher level of care from all providers but care that reflects evidence-based medicine, with quality and patient safety as top priorities. The health care industry is constantly developing its practices to best address the needs of our populations. EMS is not exempt from this need to continually reassess how we should provide the best possible care. To reinforce this national development, it should be noted that all states are being prompted to make this transition. Even states that do not use the NREMT as the testing basis for their state EMS certification, such as New York, have already started the transition. It is vital to the citizens and visitors of our Commonwealth that we do not withhold this new national standard of emergency care from them.

In terms of timing, this is a transition that will not (and should not) happen immediately, but rather should be a thoughtful and thorough transition of all EMTs, at all levels, across the Commonwealth (regardless of their NREMT status). Therefore, the deadline for the transitions to the new National EMS Scope of Practice to occur is the 2017 recertification cycle. Please note that this is different from the July 1, 2013 date for Massachusetts implementation of NREMT testing as the basis of initial Massachusetts EMS certification.



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In the attached Overview of National EMS Scope of Practice Transition, the steps to this transition, for each level, are clearly laid out. With the 2017 deadline we are hopeful this will allow adequate time for any education, budgeting, certification and licensure to occur. The transition will bring Massachusetts certification levels into necessary alignment with other states and the national standard. We will work with individuals and providers to assist and facilitate a smooth transition and make resources available for this process.

For your review, please find attached the NHTSA EMS Agenda for the Future as well as the NHTSA EMS Education Agenda for the Future and the Scope of Practice Model. These three documents provide vital direction to all leadership nationwide as the EMS community continues to develop.

#### National Registry of EMTs Adoption

Massachusetts' adoption of NREMT credentialing as a requirement for initial Massachusetts certification applies only to new EMTs, AEMTs and paramedics. This will be effective July 1, 2013. This is a critical change to both protect and enhance our future workforce and provide the highest level of integrity to our certification system. NREMT will recognize our existing EMT-Basic practical exam and provide a better testing system for our EMT-Basic candidates. The improved process will also expedite the certification process for all EMTs at all levels by many months, through an improved national infrastructure of technology and testing centers. The July 1, 2013 deadline is one for OEMS to have provided the systems necessary for this transition.

#### Closing Thoughts

We would like to reiterate the importance of the transition to the National EMS Scope of practice and that this is independent of the Commonwealth's adoption of NREMT testing as the basis for initial Massachusetts certification.

Please be assured that during this transitional period, OEMS will provide information, assistance, course approvals and resources to transition our EMS providers, educators and accredited training institutions regarding the NHTSA National EMS Scope of Practice Standards. As a result of this transition, we are convinced Massachusetts EMS will be providing our patients an improved standard of care, and we look forward to working with all of you on this shared goal.

Respectfully,

Jamie Pianka  
OEMS Director



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## Overview of the National EMS Scope of Practice Transition

Overview of National EMS Scope of Practice Transition (This applies to <u>ALL</u> Massachusetts EMTs, All Levels, regardless of NREMT status)			
Transition	Course?	Testing?	Required By
EMT-Basic to EMT	Yes but covered by first recertification continuing education cycle	None	2015 (2015 exp.) 2016 (2014 exp.)
EMT-Intermediate to Advanced EMT	Yes – currently being reviewed (apprx. 90hrs)	Written Only	2016 (2014 exp.) 2017 (2015 exp.)
EMT-Paramedic to Paramedic	Yes – currently being reviewed (apprx. 12hrs)	None	2016 (2014 exp.) 2017 (2015 exp.)
This transition does <b>NOT</b> result in NREMT status for MA-only EMTs. <b>You can only test into the NREMT.</b>			

### EMT-Basic to EMT

All Massachusetts EMT-Basics will need to transition to the National EMS Scope of Practice level, called “EMT,” by 2016. This will be a very simple process that will only include completing the new continuing education requirements. EMT-Basics will not need to take additional classes on top of their continuing education, nor will they be required to take any additional tests. All EMTs will have at least a year and a half to complete the transition by taking their required continuing education. OEMS will work to ensure that any approved classes or refreshers that have already been taken will count towards recertification. We will provide guidance on when and where these continuing education courses can be taken.

### EMT-Intermediate to AEMT

All Massachusetts EMT-Intermediates will need to transition to the National EMS Scope of Practice level, called “Advanced EMT” or “AEMT,” which replaces the Intermediate level entirely, by 2017 – or drop down to the EMT level. EMT- Intermediates will have their next full two-year certification cycle to complete the transition to AEMT. The transition for this level of certification will be by far the most difficult. We are committed to assisting all EMT-Intermediates to accomplish this transition to the extent possible. This transition requires significant additional education, as well as a test of minimum competency (cognitive skills only). OEMS will work with accredited training institutions to provide a concise and focused transition program to accomplish this educational piece. Massachusetts will not be able to retain any EMT-Intermediates based on a 28-year-old scope of practice and curriculum that does not comply with the National EMS Scope of Practice by 2017.



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Understanding the additional burden this may have for providers, OEMS will waive the Massachusetts continuing education requirements during the transition period and have the transition course to AEMT count toward required continuing education or refresher. This transition course will replace any necessary continuing education for the certification cycle in which it is taken. We will also try and reduce the cost burden by working with NREMT to provide the first NREMT test at the AEMT level at no cost, and employ other methods to reduce overall time and financial costs to the providers and their services.

OEMS strongly agrees the Advanced EMT level of certification is a critical piece of providing quality emergency medical services in our state and encourages all EMT-Intermediates to make this transition.

#### EMT-Paramedic to Paramedic

All EMT-Paramedics in Massachusetts will need to transition to the National EMS Scope of Practice level, called "Paramedic," by 2017. All EMT-Paramedics will have their next **full** certification cycle in order to accomplish their transition. This transition is not as easy as the EMT-Basic to EMT transition, but not as difficult as the EMT-Intermediate to Advanced EMT transition. The transition to the new Paramedic scope of practice requires a transition course, but does not require any competency test. Any continuing education that EMT-Paramedics have completed will be accepted by Massachusetts for the next certification renewal.

#### All Levels: Continuing Education

All existing Massachusetts EMTs, at all levels, will be able to utilize **either** the current Massachusetts course hour requirements or NREMT Continued Competency Program (NCCP) requirements – whichever they prefer -- until 2015. After 2015, EMTs at all levels will need to meet the NREMT NCCP requirements to renew their Massachusetts certification. Please note that the NREMT NCCP requirements are new, and different than current standard NREMT continuing education requirements. One major change is that **there is no more refresher course**. No matter which continuing education requirements EMS providers choose to meet during the transition period, Massachusetts' or NCCP, as of the 2014 recertification cycle, OEMS will require all Massachusetts EMS providers to utilize the NREMT computer infrastructure, and not our OEMS systems, for recording continuing education training, in order to stagger the changes taking place over the following years during transition and other EMS changes.