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**New Jersey EMS Education Guidance**

Updated 5/21/2020

Many EMS education institutions in New Jersey are concerned about the current outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact it will have on their students' educational experience. Since the spread of COVID-19 is continuing, please know that you have the Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services' support and that we will work with you to help you navigate the challenges this public health crisis has presented.

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, EMS education institutions should plan, prepare and decide how best to repond to facility closures and postponements. It is important to keep in mind that the decision you make may impact your students' graduation date.

Factors to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Implement the academic continuity plan for your institution.
- Meet with the program Medical Director to discuss options for continued learning.
- Prepare to offer distance learning (i.e. webinars) or virtual instructor led training for students.
- Plan to modify, postposne or cancel classes, for learning labs, psychomotor skills, practicums, and clinical and field experiences/rotations.
- Utilize alternative clinical or field internship affiliates that are accepting students.
- Consider extending the students' learning.
- Create an emergency communicatuion plan and maintain up to date contact information for everyone in your communication chain.
- Plan workshops and trainings to educate staff and students on prevention measures.
- Increase the daily sanitization.

- Continue to monitor current information from health officials, educational and healthcare facilities.

Some colleges, universities and hospitals are suspending instructor led courses and activities. This may impact learning labs, practicums, clinical and field experiences. Candidates who are unable to complete the educational requirements due to the public health emergency are encouraged to coordinate and action plan with their Program Director or Coordinator.

### **How should an EMS educational institution report program changes, modifications, closures, and suspensions to the Department?**

- The Program Director or Coordinator should complete a COVID-19 related unusual occurrence report, located at <https://nj.gov/health/ems/ems-toolbox/>, for any program change, closure, suspension, cancellation, or modification.
- The Program Director or Coordinator should be sure to include the class approval number and details regarding the program change.

### **Can an EMS Educational Institution change their Initial EMT program schedule?**

- Temporary schedule changes, made in response to COVID-19, are acceptable and must be reported at <https://nj.gov/health/ems/ems-toolbox/>.

### **If my initial EMT education program site temporarily closes, can I relocate my program without a site inspection?**

- Yes, you may temporarily relocate your initial EMT program to another educational facility as long as it is ADA compliant and conducive to the learning experience.
  - The educational facility shall not be a residential home.
- Program relocations must be reported as a COVID-19 related report at <https://nj.gov/health/ems/ems-toolbox/>.

### **If a paramedic student is unable to complete all regulatory requirements within 36-months, due to this public health emergency, will the Department grant a waiver?**

- The Paramedic Program Director is encouraged to work with the Medical Director to evaluate the progress of each student and develop a plan to ensure every opportunity has been taken to meet all regulatory requirements.
- The Paramedic Program Director should consider utilizing alternative clinical and field affiliates that are accepting students.

- After an evaluation is completed, and it is determined that a waiver is needed, the Paramedic Program Director should contact OEMS.
- If the Paramedic Program Director can clearly demonstrate and provide evidence that the COVID-19 crisis prohibited a student from meeting all regulatory requirements within 36-months, a waiver may be considered on a case by case basis.

**What if an Initial EMT Program student has met all program requirements EXCEPT the clinical time, can it be waived?**

- The Initial EMT Program Coordinator is encouraged to work with the Medical Director to evaluate the progress of each student and develop a plan to ensure every opportunity has been taken to meet all regulatory requirements.
- The Initial EMT Program Coordinator should consider utilizing an alternative clinical affiliate that is accepting students.
- After an evaluation is completed, and it is determined that a waiver is needed, the Initial EMT Program Coordinator should consider utilizing high fidelity simulation for the clinical experience. Detailed information on utilization of high fidelity simulation in lieu of an actual clinical experience. Details on this clinical waiver can be found at [www.nj.gov/health/ems](http://www.nj.gov/health/ems).

**Will the NREMT paramedic psychomotor examinations be canceled?**

- The NREMT paramedic psychomotor examinations will continue to be administered, subject to the guidance of local health authorities nationally. The decision to cancel an examination lies with the Examination Coordinator and the National Registry Representative in coordination with the National Registry examinations team. The decision to cancel an examination will be made as soon as possible and candidates will be notified as soon as possible. Candidates should contact the Examination Coordinator for questions and to reschedule an examination if necessary.
  - The New Jersey Department of Health Office of Emergency Medical Services will be canceling the June 2020 NREMT psychomotor examination.
  - The Department has scheduled an NREMT psychomotor examination for:
    - July 14, 2020 in Mount Laurel; and
    - August 19, 2020 in East Brunswick

## **Will EMT and Paramedic students be able to take the NREMT cognitive examination?**

- Pearson Vue is closely monitoring local conditions and is following guidance of local health authorities. Decisions are being made by each individual testing center.
- Facilities who are able to maintain appropriate social distancing and decontamination procedures are opening their doors for testing.
  - Students may view seat availability by:
    - Going to <https://home.pearsonvue.com/nremt>.
    - Select seat availability – select next.
    - Select exam availability – select next.
    - An option to view testing policies will appear – select next.
    - Enter address, city, state, and zip code – select search.
    - Select a maximum of 3 centers to view the facilities seat availability.
- The National Registry announced that, starting on May 12, 2020, EMT candidates can choose to take the official NREMT Cognitive (written) examination on their own computers at their home or office via new secure technology. Additional details can be obtained at [www.nremt.org](http://www.nremt.org).

## **What if a student has not completed the NREMT testing requirements within two years due to quarantine or impacts of the public health emergency?**

- These students must contact the NREMT at [Support@nremt.org](mailto:Support@nremt.org) and the Department at [ems@doh.nj.gov](mailto:ems@doh.nj.gov) **PRIOR** to their two year expiration date.

## **What is virtual instructor-led education?**

- Virtual instructor led education refers to education that is delivered in a virtual or simulated environment, or when an instructor and a student are in separate locations.
- The virtual instruction environment is designed to simulate the traditional classroom or learning environment.

## **What is online education?**

- Online education is a type of educational instruction that is delivered via the internet to students issuing their home computers.

**What does OEMS require for me to conduct an online or virtual education program?**

- In addition to the EMS Education Program Policy & Procedure Manual, Virtual Instructor Led and online classes should include the following:
  - Summative post-test based on the program's objectives.
  - A beta test using actual students to validate the number of continuing education credits awarded.
    - The computer network and internet access equipment necessary to ensure accessibility must be maintained and supported to allow for:
      - Electronic storage of test results, scores and other evaluation materials throughout the program.
      - Storage for a minimum of 7 years.
      - Protected with appropriate backup and security from unauthorized access.
      - Student accessibility of all browsers, plug-ins and technical requirements prior to the class.
      - Display of the real-time presentation of instructional graphics, interactive polling, and instructor feedback.
  - Instructor/Student interactions and learning activities must be possible in real-time via simultaneous visual and audio communication during the session.
  - The delivery platform must track total time spent in the learning session and provide a method of generating reports to verify attendance and activities for each participant.
  - Students must be able to access the delivery platform using the public internet and a commercially available web browser.
  - The Education Provider must:

- provide technical support for instructors and students.
  - provide a mechanism to allow participants to ask for and receive additional information or clarification for all activities and/or content, including the summative post-test, within 5 business days.
  - ensure each student has completed all videos, slide presentations, case studies, or other delivery platforms before a student is given access to the summative post-test.
  - develop a mechanism that ensures the student completes the summative test for an activity by actually reading the test items and selecting the answer based on their participation in the activity.
- Summative evaluations must include randomized questions and answers associated with the test questions.
- The Department's EMS Education Policy & Procedure Manual can be found at [www.nj.gov/health/ems/education/](http://www.nj.gov/health/ems/education/).

**Can a Refresher Class be conducted virtually or online?**

- No. Refresher classes are predominately hands-on, psychomotor skills which cannot be completed, verified and competence determined virtually.
- Instructor's wishing to propose an alternative hybrid refresher program for Department consideration must do so in writing to:
  - [ems@doh.nj.gov](mailto:ems@doh.nj.gov).
  - Subject: HYBRID REFRESHER Proposal.

**Can instructor led EMS education programs be conducted?**

- Yes, instructor led classes can be conducted as long as the instructor:
  - Follows the governor's executive order.
  - Follows appropriate social distancing guidelines.
  - Utilizes appropriate PPE and decontamination according to the recommendations set forth by the CDC and the Department.

- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
  - [www.nj.gov/health/ems](http://www.nj.gov/health/ems)
- Has a contingency plan for students who do not feel comfortable returning to class.