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**TO:** All EMS Personnel, Stakeholders, and Partners

**FROM:** Brian Litza, Chief  
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**SUBJECT:** **National Education Standards, National Scope of Practice, and It's Affect on Wisconsin EMS**

This memo will discuss issues related to standardizing EMS educational standards across the nation, and it will address the transition information sent out by the National Registry of EMTs in October 2011 to registrants. Our Wisconsin EMS office has received many inquiries regarding this mailing, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues below.

In the past several years, key studies, articles, and large-scale disasters have informed EMS professionals about the need for improving the EMS system. For example, in 1996 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) published the highly regarded consensus document titled *The EMS Agenda for the Future*, commonly referred to as the Agenda. This was a federally funded position paper completed by the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) in conjunction with the National Association of State EMS Directors (NASEMSD), today known as the National Association of State EMS Officials. The intent of the Agenda was to create a common vision for the future of EMS. This document was designed for use by government and private organizations at the national, state, and local levels to help guide planning, decision making, and policy regarding EMS. The Agenda addressed 14 attributes of EMS, including the EMS education system.” See <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/ems/FinalEducationAgenda.pdf>.

Additionally, the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) “EMS at the Crossroads” document (published in 2006) included information from the EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach (published in 2000). These documents call for a national certification and standards for training and education, and they support the lessons learned from major national disasters, like Hurricanes Katrina and Ophelia. Likewise, I wrote an article published in the January-February 2008 issue of EMS Professionals, where I talked about the national movement to create standards of EMS nationally ([http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ems/News\\_events/litza012008.pdf](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/ems/News_events/litza012008.pdf)).

Then in 2009, the National Highway Transportation Administration recommended and approved the National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Scope of Practice. This scope was designed to allow for better interoperability between states, provide a basis for EMS personnel to transition

practice between states, and assure a consistent base level of standard training and medical practice across the country for EMS. The scope was particularly timely as the nation has recently faced many natural and man made disasters. As EMS leaders began to digest these reports, they realized that changes in the EMS system needed to be implemented quickly. Based on broad discussions, the National Association of State EMS Officials and the National Registry of EMTs have worked together to create the national recommendations.

States, including Wisconsin are now working toward implementing these standards. We have adopted the National Scope of Practice and will be implementing it in our state by December 31, 2012. There has been an ongoing dialog with the Wisconsin EMS community through the EMS Program, the training centers, and the Wisconsin EMS Board about these new standards. Following is an explanation of how these changes will affect EMS in Wisconsin.

The National Association of State EMS Officials, which represents all the State EMS directors, State Education Coordinators, Trauma Managers, EMS for Children Managers, and EMS Data Managers is the organizational body implementing these changes, based on the IOM report referenced earlier in this article. The role of the National Registry of EMTs is to provide a consistent quality examination process that is used by nearly all states for licensure, and that is above all, defensible. They have over 40 years' experience in examinations and measurement and are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies, a certification accrediting agency sponsored by the National Organization for Competency Assurance. They help to assure that everyone who practices EMS in Wisconsin is minimally competent and can practice at the appropriate level. It is the National Registry of EMTs that has become, through a natural process, the national certification agency.

As the EMS Board and state training centers evaluated the changes to the National Scope of Practice and the educational standards, they studied the differences between the new scopes and the current Wisconsin scopes of practice. Their conclusions were that there were some very minor differences, but generally Wisconsin exceeded the national scopes.

Wisconsin has striven to be a leader in the care the EMS system provides to its citizens and visitors. The new national standards are in line with our current practice. You may recall that in 2009 Wisconsin EMS began talking about the new names for EMS professionals--emergency medical responder, emergency medical technician, advanced EMT, and paramedic. Initially our hope was to keep our current scopes and curricula, and just adopt the names. As we proceeded with the rule revision of DHS 110, it became clear that we needed to open statute to facilitate name changes as specific names are assigned to all levels of EMS care in statute. Therefore, we kept our current titles with the intent to change them, and once the new scopes of practice were written, we would open statute to change the names.

Next, we considered the educational curricula and the National Educational Standards. This seems to be the area of greatest concern and misunderstanding for state EMS volunteers--increased training hours and transitioning to the new EMS levels.

The EMS Board recommended creation of a curricula writing committee whose members included EMS educators, a member of the EMS Board, and members of the EMS Section. The

committee has been in place for almost a year and the progress has been slow. The charge to the curricula committee was to craft the curricula in the methodology of competency. They focused on the skill set and knowledgebase needed for competency in specific skills and concepts, and determined the additional hours necessary as a result. This is a new concept for EMS training, and it may mean that a student could see less time in the classroom and more time in a clinical setting. This is because it is not about just spending ten hours in the classroom, but rather mastering a concept or a skill. The goal is to assure that a student passing a course is competent and able to perform to the level licensed.

To date, the paramedic curriculum is complete, with the recommendation of an additional 72 hours. The other curricula are in development and will be completed by the end of the year. The intermediate EMT will be a Wisconsin-only level and will not have any curriculum change. The intermediate technician will change to the advanced EMT level. Class hours will increase for all EMS levels, but until the curricula are completed we are reluctant to speculate on the increase. As mentioned above, the curricula are to be completed by the end of 2011. As we develop a plan to transition to the new nationally registered levels, we will decide how to address the intermediate technician level. Ultimately, that level will transition to the Advanced EMT level; how and when the transition will occur is yet to be decided. Once the new curricula are finalized, we'll have a better understanding of needed changes, which will give us a better opportunity to address students' and training centers concerns. Currently, DHS 110 identifies the level but does not give a sunset date.

Regarding the transitional information that the National Registry sent out to all the applicants, once the new state curricula are completed, we will be identifying transitional issues. This will likely be completed through the refresher activities over the next two renewal cycles.

In summary, the state EMS curricula are being updated to conform to the new national education standards and scope of practice. There will be some increase in hours for classes taught under the new curricula. Be assured that the state EMS Program will proceed cautiously and will work to minimize the hardships when possible. Those holding and wanting to maintain their National Registry certification will be required to take transitional education, but it will be part of the regular renewal and not over and above the current requirements. There are many activities going on regarding all these changes, and we are doing the best we can to keep everyone informed. Please be assured that we are aware of the issues regarding these changes. We are keeping them in mind as we work with all of our stakeholders. We are not changing for the sake of change; we are changing to improve the EMS system and better serve and treat our patients.