

Agency Education Official

OEMS

**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY
MEDICAL SERVICES**

**Division of
EMS Licensure
and Certification**

**West Virginia Department of
Health and Human Resources**



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Agency Continuing Education Program

An Agency Continuing Education Program ensures that EMS continuing education contributes directly to the professional competence and skills of EMS personnel and is provided by qualified and approved instructors and institutes. The goal of continuing education is to reinforce original education, maintain and increase proficiencies, introduce new or revised concepts, and to broaden the knowledge of EMS providers throughout the State.

An Agency will accomplish this through the following:

1. By attaining State endorsement as a Continuing Education Institute.
2. By establishing and maintaining education and certification files on individuals.
3. By having regularly scheduled classes and educational opportunities available for its EMS personnel.
4. By assuring documentation and completion of all required continuing education for individuals recertifying.
5. By submitting all required "paperwork" to the appropriate certification entities.

West Virginia Rule 64-CSR-48 §8.1 & 8.5 establishes the requirements for becoming and maintaining endorsement as an EMS Continuing Education Institute and this is further clarified by Office of Emergency Medical Services Policy #5.07.11 Continuing Education Institute Requirements. While this policy covers the procedures and requirements of a Continuing Education Institute, a majority of the material deals specifically with the personnel required for endorsement as a Continuing Education Institute and their duties.

Whether called the Squad Training Officer, Education Director, Training Coordinator or something different; the person on the Agency's license listed as being over agency education is the person ultimately responsible for that Agency's continuing education program.

West Virginia Rule 64-CSR-48 §8.1 & 8.5 uses Administrative Director, Agency Training Coordinator (ATC), and Agency Training Officer (ATO) as the preferred titles. The qualifications for each have some minor variations, while the job responsibilities are universal.

Administrative Director – Sometimes referred to as Program Coordinator are, designated by the sponsoring entity as the person in charge of the education programs offered. Administrative Directors administer programs that are not sponsored within a WV licensed EMS agency. If the Administrative Director will also be involved in the teaching of continuing education courses, they must not only meet the requirements placed upon them by the entity they work for, but must also meet the qualifications defined for an ATO.

Agency Training Coordinator (ATC) and Agency Training Officer (ATO) – Designated by a licensed EMS agency. The difference between an ATC and an ATO is that an ATC is purely an administrative, non-teaching position and does not require EMS certification.

Qualifications

1. Knowledge of methodologies of instruction, guidance and evaluation of students.
(*ATOs and teaching Administrative Directors*)
2. Academic training and preparation that is at least equivalent to that of the students.
(*ATOs and teaching Administrative Directors*)
3. Complete a continuing education management program.
4. Attend updates as required by the WVOEMS.
5. Posses' current WV EMS certification. (*ATOs and teaching Administrative Directors*)

Administrative Directors, ATOs, and ATCs are responsible for the administrative duties of the education programs. Some of these responsibilities include:

1. Coordination and scheduling of all facets of CE programs offered, including but not limited to:
 - a. Appropriate Facilities
 - b. Logistics
 - c. Qualified Instructors
2. Continuous quality review and improvement of CE programs.
3. Course Scheduling.
4. Provision of necessary education equipment.
5. Maintenance of agency education records and documents.
6. Submission of course and student records as specified by WVOEMS

This is not an inclusive list, but a generalized idea of some of the responsibilities involved in the operation of a Continuing Education Institute. In the following pages these generalized responsibilities will be further expanded upon to provide a framework upon which to build an effective continuing education program.

Program Coordination

One of the primary responsibilities for the person overseeing an education program is coordinating all of the things necessary for the classes to be held. While this seems like an obvious statement, it is very often one of the most overlooked aspects. Classes do not just happen by themselves. Someone has to arrange for appropriate facilities to hold the class. Someone has to ensure that any equipment that may be needed, such as, mannequins, or A/V equipment are at the location. Someone has to ensure that any books, handouts, or pre-course materials have been delivered to the students. Someone has to make sure that there are qualified instructors, and enough of them, available to teach the course. This someone is you.

Facilities

The first question when it comes to coordinating a class is what is an appropriate facility? There is no hard fast easy answer for this question. Appropriate is what is appropriate for the subject material being taught. While a traditional desk and chair classroom may be ideal for teaching a class on documentation, it would probably not be the best location for teaching a class on vehicle extrication. The subject matter and materials to be used should dictate what will make appropriate facilities.

A few questions you should answer when determining if a location is appropriate:

- *Is the classroom "comfortable"?*

No, this does not mean that classrooms need to have recliners, but, how many times have you taken a class where the students were packed in like sardines? Ensure that there is enough room for the number of students. Students learn better if they are in a comfortable environment. Along with comfort of space, unless the class is being held outdoors, there should be a means of climate control for the classroom. It can be difficult to hear the instructor over the sound of chattering teeth, or the drip of students slowly melting from the heat. As the comfort level of the student decreases, so does the level of attention and retention.

- *Is the classroom relatively free of distractions?*
Do you share a classroom with the ambulances? (i.e. the bay, the garage, etc.) Do routes to vital access areas, (Kitchen, T.V. Room, and Crew Quarters) run right through the middle of your classroom? Then you may have a distracting classroom. Studies have proven that the more distractions there are in the classroom, the lower the learning and retention thresholds become. Does this mean that you cannot use the ambulance bay to hold a class? Absolutely not, but if you do take it into consideration how busy will it be. Will the doors have to be opened and closed a lot? Will ambulances be pulling in and out all during class? Will opening the garage door let in so much cold air that instead of paying attention to the lecture students are instead burning their notes to now keep warm. (See previous section on comfort) If so you may want to consider a different, less disturbing location to hold the class. Also consider if where you intend to have your class is a high traffic area for your organization. If people have to constantly pass through your classroom to carry on daily activities of the agency, you may want to consider how distracting it will be for not only the students, but also the instructor. There is nothing like the sound of 4 minutes worth of microwave popcorn popping as you try to lecture on the electrical pathways of the heart.
- *Are there facilities available for use nearby if you are conducting an outdoor class?*
The third tree from the left behind the tall grass is really not an acceptable answer to this. As the person in charge, you should take this into consideration. It may be that you have to make arrangements to have port-a-johns brought to the class site.

Logistics

Logistics covers the planning of, and the details involved in, having a successful class and ultimately a successful education program. Facility choice is but a part of that logistical planning process. As the person in charge of coordination of the agency's education programs it is up to you to ensure that everything that may be needed for a class is available.

Some of the logistical issues that may arise are:

- *Facilities*
See above section on facilities.
- *Equipment*
When planning for a class the person charged with overseeing education, while working with the class instructor, should make sure that all equipment needed for the class is available and in working order. It is difficult and rather embarrassing to go to teach a class on spinal immobilization and realize that no one brought a backboard. Along with having the equipment available, make sure that the instructor is familiar with said equipment. As we know not all EMS equipment is made or operates in the same way. When speaking of equipment operation, be sure the instructor is familiar with the operation of your agency's A/V equipment. This can save valuable time in the classroom if the instructor does not have to take class time to learn how to work the projector, DVD player, SmartBoard, etc. It is also the responsibility of the person coordinating an agency's education to have plans in place for a class to continue in the event a piece of equipment breaks or malfunctions. Materials students may need can also be considered equipment for the class. If a class has certain handouts, or a book

that students need, it is the job of the agency education person to make sure that students have received these. This could be as simple as following up with the class instructor to make sure that these materials were given to the students, up to and including handling this task. Ultimately, this is a logistical task and falls on your shoulders.

- *Instructional Staff*
It is the responsibility of the person who coordinates an agency's education programs to ensure that classes are taught by qualified instructors. Instructor qualifications will be covered in the next section.
- *Other logistical issues*
When preparing for a class, it is your job to anticipate and plan solutions for problems that may occur during the course of the class. This may be as simple as having extra copies of handouts available for students that do not have them for the class, to arranging for bottled water to be delivered to an outdoor class on an extremely hot day. Issues such as these require forethought and preplanning, but by doing so, classes run seamlessly and provide a better learning environment for the students.

Qualified Instructors

It is doubtful that the person in charge of the agency's education department will be able to perform the necessary administrative activities and conduct all of the scheduled classes. There is simply not enough time to do this. In fact if the agency's education person may not even teach any classes, but only coordinates those responsible for the actual instruction.

West Virginia Rule 64-CSR-48 §8 grants the ability to establish standards for all levels of EMS educators to the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services (WVOEMS). Per WVOEMS policy #5.03.11 and #5.06.11, EMS instructors shall meet the following criteria to receive and maintain instructor credentials. It is the responsibility of the education coordinator to ensure that all instructors meet these requirements.

- *Lead Instructors*
For each class that is taught a lead instructor must be designated. The lead instructor is the person in charge of that particular class and is responsible for ensuring that any secondary or guest instructors follow the given curricula and lesson plans for the class.

The following criteria must be met:

1. High school diploma or GED
2. Current WV certification as an EMT or higher. Must hold certification at a minimum of the class level being taught.
3. Four (4) years field experience at the level of or higher than the class being taught.
4. Successful completion of a WVOEMS approved educational methodology course, or equivalent professional higher education.
5. Successful completion of sixteen (16) hours supervised student teaching experience.
6. Meet the requirements of the sponsoring educational institution.
7. Successful initial and ongoing instructor evaluation by the WVOEMS.
8. Completion of required continuing education for EMS instructors.

- *Visiting/Guest Instructor or Subject Matter Expert*
A visiting or guest instructor is a qualified person who has expertise in specific areas. These may include, but are not limited to, physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, rescue personnel.

The criteria for Visiting/Guest Instructor or Subject Matter Expert:

1. Possess expertise in a particular clinical discipline or skill set.
2. May or may not possess EMS certification or emergency experience.
3. May not serve as lead instructor for any EMS course.

Students should be asked to evaluate program instructors on a regular basis. This will give you feedback on your instructional staff and can help to identify areas where improvements can be made.

Quality Review and Improvement

A key to any successful education program is being able to review the program, identify areas of improvement, and then implement the changes needed. This sounds fairly easy, but in reality it's not. We often have great difficulty in objectively looking at our own endeavors and finding fault. Keep in mind, no matter how good your education program is, there is always some way it can be improved.

When reviewing the quality of the agency's education programs, you should look at a few different aspects to determine if and where improvements can be made.

- *Up to date*
This should be the first place you look when performing Quality Review of agency education programs. As it turns out this is also the easiest. Content should be current with standards of care. As emergency medicine changes so should the content of classes. How many of us still remember Bretylium in the ACLS algorithms?
- *Relevance*
Not only should the content be current, but it should also have relevance to those taking the class. If you are teaching a basic airway class to EMTs, it would not be relevant to teach them the pharmacology of the various RSI drugs. There is nothing worse than taking a class only to find out that it has little to no use to you or your job.
- *Instructors*
The teacher can make or break a class. The instructor must have knowledge of the subject matter and be well prepared. It is pretty obvious when an instructor is trying to "wing" the material and this often leads to incorrect information being passed on to the students.

There are many means of evaluating a program for quality. Some are more reliable than others. It will be up to you to determine which methods your program will use. The method of review is less important than what you do with the information gained. As the agency's education official, you should take the information contained in the evaluations and use that to develop a plan for improving future classes.

Education Records

Individual Education Records

A significant portion of education coordination centers on record keeping. Education records will need to be maintained on each person in your agency and should be kept separate from their personnel files. It will be your job to ensure that education records are kept secure and that people are updating them as needed. Though this seems like a fairly simple endeavor, if not handled properly it can quickly become overwhelming. Each person's education record can be the difference between maintaining certification and possibly being unemployed.

Each person in your agency should have an education file that is maintained by the coordinator. This file should include but is not limited to:

- Copy of current State Certification card.
- Copy of current National Registry card (if applicable).
- Copies of any current alphabet cards. (ACLS, PHTLS, GEMS, etc.)
- Copies of any instructor certifications held.
- Copies of any certificates that apply to the current recertification period.
- Proof of any specialty education or certifications. (EVOC, HazMat, Extrication, etc.)

There is no specified or preferred method of how to store these records. Many agencies use the traditional filing cabinet with a folder for each person. With today's technology, others are converting their education files to electronic documents. The method you choose to use will be between you and your agency. While the agency will maintain education records on each of its personnel, it is still the responsibility of the individual to ensure that those records are up to date and contain all of their education.

Agency Education Program Records

Along with individual education records, you will be responsible for maintaining records on all education programs provided by your agency. These will include paper or electronic materials related to the class as well as submitting the proper "paperwork" to the WVOEMS.

For each program offered, the following should be kept on file:

- Confirmation of approval by the WVOEMS. (i.e. approval number)
- Class Roster signed by all individuals in the class.
- Copies of any tests or assessments done during the class. (If applicable)
- Copies of any class or instructor evaluations. (If applicable)
- Any improvement plans for the class. (If applicable)

If the program was not previously approved by the WVOEMS you should also have copies of all materials sent to WVOEMS to have the class approved. Those materials will be discussed a little later in this manual.

These files will serve as a means of verification for your students if they are audited for recertification. It will also be your proof of continuing education offerings for your agency's licensure inspection.

Instructor Education Records

As part of the criteria to maintain credentials as a lead instructor with the WVOEMS, each instructor is required to document the following during their credential period:

1. A minimum of 40 hours of in-classroom EMS instruction, and;
2. A minimum of 20 hours continuing education in topics related to educational enhancement and improvement.

This does not prohibit educational institutions from establishing additional requirements for their affiliated instructors. It also does not alleviate the requirements placed upon instructors by the agency granting instructorship. (i.e. American Heart Association requirements that instructors teach two classes per year to maintain their instructor certification, or like requirements.)

It will be the job of the education coordinator to keep records for each instructor affiliated with the agency. These records should contain:

- Copies of all current instructor cards, permits, and/or certifications.
- Proof of continuing education in topics related to educational enhancement and improvement.
- Proof of classroom teaching experience. (see sample form in appendix)

Classroom teaching experience will need to be accurately documented. If an instructor teaches a one hour section of a PHTLS class, that instructor gets one hour of in classroom teaching. Not sixteen hours because PHTLS is a sixteen hour course. Now if that same instructor teaches a one hour lecture, and then does two hours of skills evaluation for the class as well, that instructor receives three hours classroom teaching. As the education coordinator it is your job to ensure that your instructors' hours are correct. Random audits may be performed by the WVOEMS and falsification of hours can lead to revocation of teaching credentials and possibly revocation of an agency's endorsement as an educational institute.

As was stated earlier record keeping can appear simple, but can quickly become overwhelming if not well organized and kept up with. If the education coordinator fails at this, it may well mean people lose their certification and/or agencies lose their endorsement to conduct education programs.

Education Programs

By now you are sitting there thinking: "I've read what it takes to conduct education, the requirements to be an instructor, and what records I need to keep. Now can I finally hold a class?" No, not yet, but you are almost there. Like everything in today's world, the proper "paperwork" has to be filled out and submitted to the WVOEMS.

Every program that your agency teaches will require approval by the WVOEMS. OEMS Policy # 5.04.11 establishes the standards for submission of courses for review and approval.

Pre-approved Courses

For the purpose of this manual pre-approved courses are courses that the WVOEMS has already reviewed and approved for CE credit. ACLS, PHTLS, and GEMS are all examples of pre-approved courses. For a list of pre-approved classes please see appendix 1.

- Notification of a pre-approved course must be submitted to WVOEMS a minimum of five (5) working days prior to the start date of the course.
- Submissions not meeting this standard will be denied.
- Hours completed in an unapproved course will not count towards recertification.

Non-preapproved Courses

A non-preapproved course is any course that has not previously been reviewed for content.

- Requests for courses that have not been pre-approved must be submitted to WVOEMS a minimum of thirty (30) working days prior to the start date of the course.
- In addition to the class request the following must be submitted for content review:
 - Course outline or syllabus
 - Lesson plans and educational objectives
 - Any handouts or other supporting materials
 - Target audience and anticipated class size
 - Anticipated hours credited
 - Examples of any tests that may be administered
 - Listing of necessary equipment or education environment
 - Any student costs including but not limited to texts and or supplies
 - Any pre-requisites
- Hard copies of supplemental material will be accepted; however the submission date will be when received at WVOEMS, **NOT** the post mark date.
- Courses may be approved only after all required materials have been received and reviewed.
- Any class not meeting this standard will be denied.
- Hours completed in an unapproved course will not count towards recertification.

If any questions arise during the review of a course you have submitted, you may be asked to provide further information to the WVOEMS before the class can be approved.

Courses Taken Outside WVOEMS Educational System

We all know that not all EMS education occurs at the agency level; or even within the confines of the state for that matter. There are many opportunities for education at hospitals, non-EMS related conferences, national conferences, etc. With this in mind, the following will provide a means to request continuing educational credit.

- Requests for CE credit from education offerings taken outside of the WVOEMS educational system must be submitted no later than thirty (30) days after completion of the course.
- The following must be submitted for review by the WVOEMS:
 - Proof of course completion (certificate of completion, letter of completion,)
 - Course outline or syllabus
 - List of educational objectives
 - Course handouts and other supporting materials
 - Listing of any agencies that have already accredited the course (ACEP, AMA, AHA, NAEMT, AAO, etc.)
- Hard copies of supplemental material will be accepted; however the submission date is when received at WVOEMS, **NOT** the post mark date

- Course may be approved only after all required materials have been received and reviewed
- Any submission not meeting this standard will be denied
- Hours completed in an unapproved course will not count towards recertification

As stated earlier, if any questions arise during the review of a course you have submitted, you may be asked to provide further information to the WVOEMS before the class can be approved.

Appendix 2 contains the form that will need to be filed to request approval for non-preapproved classes and classes taken outside of the WVOEMS educational system.

Conclusion

You have finally made it. If you have everything discussed in this manual, you are now ready to start scheduling and conducting EMS education for your personnel. Yes, there are many changes to the way things were done. These changes were not designed to hinder, or harm anyone's education program, but instead to set standards that everyone will be held to and expected to meet if they are going to educate our EMS providers. The bar has been set. It is the sincerest hopes of the Office of Emergency Medical Services that this bar is not seen as a ceiling, but as something to vault over and push to new heights.

Remember: "Those that we educate today will be those that treat our family and friends tomorrow."

