
POSITION STATEMENT

National Association of EMS Educators

Accepted by the NAEMSE Board of Directors February 4, 20001



Statement of Good Practices by EMS Educators in the Discharge of Their Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

Emergency Medical Services educators typically are members of two professions (both teaching and practice) and thus should comply with the requirements and standards of each. EMS educators who are EMS providers are subject to the law of professional ethics in force in the relevant jurisdictions. In addition, as members of the teaching profession, all EMS Educators are subject to the regulations of the institutions at which they teach.

This statement does not diminish the guidelines of other sources of ethical and professional conduct. Instead, it is intended to provide general guidance to EMS educators concerning ethical and professional standards both because of the intrinsic importance of those standards and because EMS educators serve as important role models for EMS students. The EMS education experience frequently provides the student's first exposure to the EMS profession and thus EMS educators inevitably serve as important role models for students. The National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) supports the highest standards of ethics and professionalism within the EMS education setting.

EMS educators responsibilities extend beyond the classroom to include out of class associations with students and other professional activities. Members of the EMS teaching profession should have a strong sense of the special obligations that attach to their calling. They should recognize their responsibility to serve others and not be limited to pursuit of self-interest. This general aspiration cannot be achieved by edict, for moral integrity and dedication to the welfare of others cannot be legislated. Nevertheless, a public statement of good practices concerning ethical and professional responsibility can enlighten newcomers and remind experienced teachers about the basic ethical and professional tenets of their profession.

Although the norms of conduct set forth in this Statement may be relevant when questions concerning propriety of conduct arise in a particular institutional context, the statement is not published as a disciplinary code. Rather, the primary purpose of the Statement is to provide guidance to EMS Educators concerning their responsibilities (1) to students, (2) as professional educators, (3) to colleagues, and (4) to the profession and the general public.

I. Responsibilities To Students

As teachers, scholars, counselors, mentors, and friends, EMS educators can profoundly influence students' attitudes concerning professional competence and responsibility. EMS educators should assist students to recognize the responsibility of EMS providers to advance the delivery of emergency medical services for individual and for the community at large.

Because of their inevitable function as role models, EMS educators should be guided by the most sensitive ethical and professional standards. As follows:

EMS educators should aspire to excellence in teaching and to mastery of the theories and practices of their subjects.

They should prepare conscientiously for class and employ teaching methods appropriate for the subject matters and objectives of their courses.

The objectives and requirements of their courses, including applicable attendance and grading rules, should be clearly stated.

Classes should be met as scheduled or, when this is impracticable, classes should be rescheduled at a time reasonably convenient for students, or alternative means of instruction should be provided.

EMS educators have an obligation to treat students with civility and respect and to foster a stimulating and productive learning environment in which the pros and cons of debatable issues are fairly acknowledged.

EMS educators should nurture and protect intellectual freedom for their students and colleagues.

Evaluation of student work is one of the fundamental obligations of EMS educators. As follows:

Examinations and assignments should be conscientiously designed and all student work should be evaluated with impartiality.

Grading should be done in a timely fashion and should be consistent with standards recognized as legitimate within the institution and the profession.

A student who so requests should be given an explanation of the grade assigned.

EMS educators should be reasonably available to counsel students about academic matters, career choices, and professional interests. In performing this function:

Educators should make every reasonable effort to ensure that the information they transmit is timely and accurate.

When in the course of counseling an EMS educator receives information that the student may reasonably expect to be confidential, the educator should not disclose that information unless required to do so by institutional rule or applicable law.

Educators should inform students concerning the possibility of such disclosure.

Educators should be as fair and complete as possible when communicating evaluative recommendations for students and should not permit undesirable or irrelevant considerations to infect these recommendations.

If information disclosed in confidence by the student to the educator makes it impossible for the educator to write a fair and complete evaluation/recommendation without revealing the information, the educator should so inform the student and refuse to provide the evaluation/recommendation unless the student consents to full disclosure.

Discriminatory conduct based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability or handicap, age, or political beliefs is unacceptable in the EMS education community. To follow:

EMS educators should seek to make the education setting a hospitable community for all students.

EMS educators should be sensitive to the harmful consequences of instructor or student conduct or comments in classroom discussions or elsewhere that perpetuate stereotypes or prejudices involving such factors.

EMS educators should not sexually harass students and should not use their role or position to induce a student to enter into a sexual relationship, or to subject a student to a hostile academic environment based on any form of sexual harassment.

Sexual relationships between an EMS educator and a student who are not married to each other or who do not have a preexisting similar relationship are inappropriate whenever the educator has a professional responsibility for the student in such matters as teaching a course or in otherwise evaluating, supervising, or advising a student as part of a school program.

Even when an educator has no professional responsibility for a student, the educator should be sensitive to the perceptions of other students that a student who has a sexual relationship with a professor may receive preferential treatment from the educator or the educator's colleagues.

An educator who is closely related to a student by blood or marriage, or who has a preexisting similar relationship with a student, normally should avoid roles involving a professional responsibility for the student.

II. Responsibilities As Professional Educators

A basic responsibility of the community of EMS educators is to refine, extend, and transmit knowledge. As members of that community, EMS educators share with their colleagues in the other education and professional disciplines the obligation to discharge that responsibility. EMS educational institutions and programs also have a responsibility to maintain an atmosphere of freedom and tolerance in which knowledge can be sought and shared without hindrance. EMS educators are obligated, in turn, to make the best and fullest use of that freedom to fulfill their scholarly responsibilities.

In teaching, as well as in research, writing, and publication, the scholarship of others is indispensable to one's own knowledge. An EMS educator has a responsibility to be informed concerning the relevant knowledge base in the fields in which the educator writes and teaches. To keep current in any field requires continuing study. To this extent the EMS educator must remain a student. EMS educators have a responsibility to engage in their own research and publish their conclusions. In this way, EMS educators participate in an intellectual exchange that tests and improves their knowledge of the field, to the ultimate benefit of their students, the profession, and society.

The EMS educator's commitment to truth requires intellectual honesty and open-mindedness. Although an EMS educator should feel free to criticize another's work, distortion or misrepresentation is always unacceptable. Relevant evidence and arguments should be addressed. Conclusions should be frankly stated, even if unpopular.

When another's scholarship is used-whether that of another educator or that of student-it should be fairly summarized and candidly acknowledged. Significant contributions require acknowledgement in every context in which ideas are exchanged. Publication permits at least three ways of doing this: shared authorship, attribution by footnote or endnote, and discussion of another's contribution within the main text.

An EMS educator has a responsibility to preserve the integrity and independence of research and new knowledge. Sponsored or remunerated research should always be acknowledged with full disclosure of the interests of the parties.

III. Responsibilities To Colleagues

EMS educators should treat colleagues and staff members with civility and respect.

EMS educators should comply with institutional rules or policies requiring confidentiality concerning oral or written communications. Such rules or policies frequently will exist with respect to personnel matters and evaluations of student performance.

As is the case with respect to students (Part I), sexual harassment, or discriminatory conduct involving colleagues or staff members on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability or handicap, age, or political beliefs is unacceptable.

IV. Responsibilities To The EMS Community And General Public

An EMS educator occupies a unique role as a bridge between the EMS community and students preparing to become members of that community. It is important that EMS educators accept the responsibilities of professional status. At a minimum, an EMS educator should adhere to the Code or Rules of Conduct of the state EMS division. Conduct warranting discipline as an EMS educator or provider should be a matter of serious concern to the EMS educator's school and the general public.

One of the traditional obligations of educators is to engage in uncompensated public service. As role models for students and as members of the EMS profession, EMS educators share this responsibility. This responsibility can be met in a variety of ways, including direct patient contact through public aid programs, lecturing in continuing EMS education programs, educating public school pupils or other public groups concerning the EMS system.

Adopted and modified with permission from:

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Publications Manager, The Association of American Law Schools Statement of Good Practices by Law Professors in the Discharge of Their Ethical and Professional Responsibilities <http://www.aals.org/ethic.html>