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# POSITION STATEMENT

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**National Association of EMS Educators**  
**Value of Recertification of the Emergency Services Professional**  
***Accepted by the NAEMSE Board of Directors November 10, 2003***



**Summary:** It is the position of the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) that recertification is and must remain an integral part of maintaining licensure for the EMS professional. The process of evaluating the EMS professional and assuring competence is recognized in every avenue of the medical field. A critical component of continuing education involves knowledge and skill enhancement.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of NAEMSE that recertification remains at the forefront of the EMS provider's plan for professional growth. This plan enhances competence and exemplifies the highest ideals of professionals expected by EMS personnel.

## *Background*

Professional accountability requires a self-regulating profession to set and maintain credible, useful standards for its members.<sup>3</sup> Competence is mandated at all levels of patient care. Continuously from the onset of the event or illness through the patient's definitive care, the EMS professional is held to a consistent standard of skills and knowledge. Knowledge gained during initial training and education must be periodically reevaluated for adequacy and consistency with current medical evidence. Assessment and acceptability standards are typically set at a state level. Outcomes are the ultimate criteria; they provide measures of the consequences of what is actually done in practice.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the nature of this field of medicine, not only are techniques and equipment changing periodically but so are the types of patient encounters. Versatility is an attribute acquired early in one's EMS education and continues to provide an open avenue of learning throughout the career. Recertification should not only measure the EMS professional's ability to react appropriately in the everyday or typical patient encounters but also it must assess their ability to manage atypical or less than frequent situations. Adaptability and resourcefulness are among the many requisites required to remain a competent prehospital care provider.

Professional appearance and behaviors are of the utmost importance. The provider/patient relationship is distinctive in that confidentiality and good judgment play major roles in the relationship. Human nature has provided us with a unique ability to either instill confidence or mistrust simply from an initial encounter with an EMS professional. The relationship between the EMS provider and the patient is one of unequal authority by virtue of the special knowledge possessed by the professional.<sup>2</sup> The ability to develop interpersonal relationships is difficult to define and to judge. Personal and ethical characteristics are not as readily examined as are cognitive and technical skills. While affective skills are a bit more difficult to measure than are cognitive or psychomotor skills, these skills must be an integral component of recertification.

EMS professionals are taught to participate in refresher education and continuing education to reinforce, update, and expand our knowledge and skills.<sup>1</sup> State and local protocols dictate that certification and recertification remain consistent and timely. From a Quality Improvement standpoint, EMS professionals are tasked to excellence in prehospital care by many different sectors. These sectors include state and local authorities and the public as a whole. In order to meet these challenges, NAEMSE advocates the use of recertification and certification and their associated educational principles.

### *Pros and Cons of Recertification*

#### **Pros:**

- Method of enhancing competence
- Method of assuring accountability
- Promotes versatility in all provider levels
- Provides opportunity for remedial education
- Measure of ability and adaptability

#### **Cons:**

- Validation methods are questionable
- Variability of parameters
- Time-dependant vs. competence based
- Interprovider reliability

#### **References**

1. Bledsoe, B., Brady Prentice Hall, *Paramedic Care: Principles and Practices*, Vol 1
2. Stoy W., National Guidelines for EMT Continuing Education. U.S. Dot/NHTSA
3. Benson, J. Certification and Recertification: One Approach to Professional Accountability AIM 1991: 114; 238-242