



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Special Committee on Emergency Management
and Continuity of Government
One East Main Street
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Senator Robert Jauch, Representative Joan Ballweg,
and members of the committee;

It was an honor to present to your committee on December 18th, 2008 in regards to emergency medical services. After my presentation you had requested that I work with the Wisconsin Technical College System to discuss the issues and report back to the committee our findings and discussions. I have been working on these matters with the WTCS and we are providing the following response.

EMS REPORT

The State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS)-Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Section is working hard to address the issues regarding EMS primary and continuing education availability, the content of these educational offerings and method in which it the content is delivered. The EMS Section works collaboratively with the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) and several independent EMS training centers affiliated with health care organizations to provide the training necessary to ensure a qualified workforce and provide for qualified EMS instructors.

Several collaborative initiatives to address the recruitment and retention of EMS providers, especially those within our rural communities have been coordinated by DHS. Providing initial training and continuing education for EMS providers continues to be a challenge. The following is an assessment of the current challenges and suggestions for improvement.

Educational Programs: Types, Enrollments, Graduates

Educational programs are regularly available at all 16 districts of the WTCS. In addition, training is provided by four Training Centers across the state. WTCS offers six (6) levels of training. The programs and the 5-year enrollments are provided below. While the Basic EMT program shows a 13% reduction in 5 years, it is important to recognize that the increase in higher level training

programs, which includes Basic EMT training, likely reflects an overall increase in the number of students who are trained to the entry level.

Educational Program Enrollments	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
EMT-B (<1 yr)	1850	1824	1885	1857	1608
EMT-I (<1 yr)	4	10	10	36	42
EMT-IT (<1 yr)	408	461	462	417	504
EMT-P (<1 yr)	283	318	295	248	294
EMT-P (1yr)	19	27	43	21	155
EMT-P (AAS)	46	54	83	222	397

Competency-Based EMS training

Currently DHS rule specifies the contact hours needed for each level of EMT training. Moving to a competency-based training model would reduce the burden on EMS providers by providing initial and continuing education in a reduced amount of time than the current hour-based model, while maintaining the assurance of EMS provider competency. The change to a competency-based model, however, will require a change in Wisconsin's DHS-EMS Administrative Rules (HFS 110, 111, 112 and 113).

Instructor Certifications

WTCS currently employs 302 instructors who are certified by DHS to provide EMS education. The provision of training for initial certification is provided annually through the WTCS in the form of the Instructor Orientation Workshop scheduled every August and the Instructor Coordinator Meeting held annually each February. From the year 2001 through 2008, WTCS trained 260 EMS instructors. The annual participation in the WTCS sponsored instructor training averages about 28 attendees. DHS rule requires instructors to renew every two years. Continuing education is a requirement for renewal.

In an effort to provide more efficient training for initial instructor certification, revisions to the Instructor Coordinator Training Program are underway. The revisions will reflect the need for more efficient delivery methods, while continuing to meet the national standards set forth for educating EMS Instructors and the requirements of the WTCS. Changes to the instructor training curriculum are expected to be in place by 2010.

Instructor Qualifications and Evaluations

All EMS instructors are certified by the DHS-EMS Section. DHS-EMS Section works collaboratively with WTCS to review applicants to ensure compliance with current instructor qualifications. Instructors are required to maintain current licensure and/or National EMS Registry certification at the level in which they instruct, along with pertinent professional development (continuing education) requirements. This process ensures compliance with instructor requirements and exposure to the latest in clinical practice and instructional delivery methods.

Currently there is no required or standard process for the evaluation of instructors who teach EMS courses. The State of Wisconsin EMS Advisory Board is working to create a valid tool to measure the effectiveness of our EMS instructors. The suggestion by DHS-EMS Section is to

make this a DHS-EMS Administrative Rule requirement, ensuring all EMS training programs participate in the quality improvement process. This project is currently under review by the State EMS Advisory Board and due to be completed by the end of 2009.

Credit for Prior Learning

The DHS-EMS Section currently has a pilot project underway to evaluate the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) concept and to create a framework that can be used as a model for credit transfer in the future. Awarding credit in conjunction with continuing education allows for a more direct route to EMS licensure and eventual progression to higher levels of EMS licensure.

Continuing Education

Continuing education is a requirement under DHS rule for licensure/certification for both EMS providers and instructors. All 16 districts within the WTCS offer a wide range of continuing education courses. The data below reflects the number of continuing education course offerings, and enrollments in those courses offered at the WTCS districts.

EMS related Continuing Education Courses at WTCS	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Total Classes Offered	236	254	234
Total Enrollments	37,176	29,913	33,555

Flexible delivery of continuing education is an important tool in increasing access to courses and is already being utilized in Wisconsin. As the demonstration of application of theory to hands-on care is an integral part of EMS instruction and clinical practice, methods that combine distance education with in-person demonstration of skills are being piloted by WTCS districts.

Alternate Delivery for EMS Education

In 2003, Mid-State Technical College (MSTC) was approved by the DHS-EMS Section to develop alternative delivery methods for paramedic refresher training.

MSTC chose EMSED.com, a learning management system (LMS) for course delivery. The piloted course included PowerPoint presentations with "voice-overs" and included an online examination. The results of this pilot varied. While the flexibility of utilizing online materials was positive and most course content was excellent, there were some negatives. Barriers included issues with access to adequate technology, varying levels of student participation and the inability for participants to engage in online learning during certain periods of time based on employer mediated scheduling limitations. All participants did successfully complete the refresher course.

MSTC was funded by a grant from the WTCS to develop blended learning materials for all of their EMS courses. A total of 11 courses for Basic-EMT initial, EMT refresher and paramedic refresher were offered via an alternative delivery method. The results of this initiative are as follows:

- Four paramedic refreshers were created. Participation was limited (three participants) and some problems were encountered with course navigation by both the participants and the

instructor. Two participants completed the courses successfully while one participant failed likely attributable to insufficient academic participation.

- Subsequent refreshers were more successful with the revisions. Problems with navigation were corrected and thirty-nine participants successfully completed these courses.

- Initial EMT-Basic and refresher courses were completed with limited success. Nine participants started the initial EMT-Basic course, with four completing the course. Of these four, one passed the National Registry of EMT's (NREMT) examination process, two failed and one has yet to take the examination.
 - Initial EMT- Basic course: Review of the course identified the positive aspect of course flexibility, but identified a negative, in the length of the course, which was two academic semesters. It was determined that the length of the course was the reason for the participants' failure of this course.
 - Basic-EMT Refresher course: MSTC ran three EMT-Basic refresher courses with all participants successfully completing these courses. Students were engaged and had a course instructor familiar with course delivery. Issues identified with these courses were similar with other blended course offerings. These include navigation of the LMS and lack of computer experience.

MSTC plans for future courses include the use of a functional LMS, such as "Blackboard," course content updates, instructor professional development and the addition of other innovations, such as podcasts and related technology.

Additionally, MSTC has agreed to share their information with all EMS training programs and actively participate in the continued development of alternative delivery methods of EMS education.

Working collaboratively with WTCS, State of Wisconsin EMS Advisory Board and Wisconsin Technical College System EMS Advisory Council and other stakeholders, the DHS-EMS Section will continue to develop recommendations to on how best to design and implement an effective method of educating our new EMS providers and ensure continued competence of our existing EMS providers.

Should you have any questions or need clarifications, Tim Weir from the WTCS would be happy to assist. He may be contacted at 608.266.0995 and timothy.weir@wtcsystem.edu . Once again thank you for the opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,



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