

**Iowa Dept. of Public Health  
Bureau of Emergency Medical Services**

December 1, 2006

**Proposed National Scope of Practice Model – Fact Sheet**

**History**

The 1996 “Emergency Medical Services Agenda for the Future,” released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), identified that EMS in the United States needed to develop standard categories of EMS providers. This idea was further developed in the “Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach” in 2000. The Education Agenda for the Future recommended the development of a National EMS Core Content to identify the skills involved in out-of-hospital emergency care. The core content would then be divided into levels through the EMS Scope of Practice. Educational standards would be developed based on the scope of practices for each level.

In the fall of 2004 the first draft of the National EMS Scope of Practice Model was released. The Scope of Practice Committee requested input from all EMS stakeholders on the initial draft. The document was reviewed, and comments submitted, by the Iowa EMS Advisory Council. Draft 2 was released in the spring of 2005, again with a period for public comment. Final Draft 4 was submitted to NHTSA in the fall of 2005 and is pending final publication.

In January of 2006 the Iowa EMS Advisory Council made a recommendation to the Bureau of EMS to review the National EMS Scope of Practice Model for adoption in the State of Iowa. The Bureau of EMS has identified the following issues with either adopting or deviating from the model.

**Issues with adopting the National Model:**

- Support for training will exist with educational standards and textbooks
- The National Registry of EMT will base certification exams on the model
- It will be easier for people entering Iowa with certification from other states to gain Iowa certification
- There are clearly marked differences between the skills of providers.
- The Advanced EMT level creates a provider with advanced procedures which are high benefit/low risk
- Current levels will require transition to new model
- Will require re-education of health care system concerning titles and skills of providers.
- The model may not meet the needs of Iowa’s EMS system

## **Issues with not adopting the National Model**

- Training curriculums and educational support material will need to be updated and maintained
- A valid, reliable and defensible certification examination process will require development and maintenance
- It will be more difficult for providers from other states to enter Iowa and for Iowa providers to gain certification in other states.
- Future federal funding may be dependent on meeting the model

## **Developments:**

Since the release of the final draft of the National EMS Scope of Practice Model, the Institute of Medicine has released the report "Emergency Medical Services at the Crossroads." The report recommended that, "State governments should adopt a common scope of practice for EMS personnel, with state licensing reciprocity." The report states that adoption of a common scope of practice would aid in consistent provision of emergency medical care across the nation and help with workforce mobility issues between states.

The educational standards to support the model are currently under development by the National Association of EMS Educators. Initial drafts are expected to be available for public review in the spring of 2007. The final education standards are planned for release in the fall of 2008. Until these guidelines are released, there are many questions concerning the educational programs leading to certification that can not be answered. The Bureau of EMS and the Iowa EMS Advisory Council will carefully review these documents as they become available.

Besides the guidelines, there are other issues unanswered concerning implementations of the model. Publishers have not announced release dates for educational materials to support the new guidelines and the National Registry of EMTs has not indicated when certification examinations will be available.

This is a time of change in EMS not only in Iowa, but across the nation. It is important that EMS stakeholder be knowledgeable and provide input into the decisions to be made. The documents referenced in this fact sheet are posted on the Bureau of EMS website at [www.idph.state.ia.us/ems/scope\\_of\\_practice.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/ems/scope_of_practice.asp).