

Washington State Department of Health
Office of Community Health Systems

Education Requirements for the
Recertification of EMS Personnel
and OTEP Development



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History

In 1989, the Washington State Legislature mandated the “adoption of requirements for ongoing training and evaluation, as approved by the county medical program director, to include appropriate evaluation for individual knowledge and skills. The first responder, emergency medical technician or emergency medical services provider agency may elect a program of continuing education and a written and practical examination instead of meeting the ongoing training and evaluation requirements,” RCW 18.73.081 (3) (c).

This legislation resulted in two methods for first responders and EMTs to obtain education to meet recertification requirements. These include:

1. Continuing medical education (CME), requiring people to complete a written and practical skills certification examinations at the end of their certification period.
2. Ongoing training and evaluation program (OTEP), which includes ongoing written and practical skills evaluations as part of the training program.

In 1996, a pilot program was applied for and approved by the Department of Health (DOH) to allow Dr. Lynn Wittwer, Clark County Medical Program Director, to conduct a pilot OTEP program for Clark County paramedics. Upon conclusion of the pilot paramedic OTEP program and review by the DOH Licensing and Certification EMS Advisory Committee, it was recommended to expand the OTEP process to include intermediate life support (EMT- intermediate levels) and advanced life support (EMT-paramedic) certification levels, which is permissible under RCW 18.71.205.

The development of "OTEP" for all levels of EMS personnel recertification is intended to:

- Reduce "test anxiety" associated with the written and practical examinations.
- Assist department or agency "in-house" EMS training.
- Assist departments with large numbers of volunteers.
- Provide a program based on positive reinforcement in education and evaluation.
- Simplify the recertification.
- Provide an alternative to those departments or agencies that find it difficult to schedule personnel into formal practical and written examinations.
- To help people who desire to maintain National Registry credentials meet the reregistration requirements.

General education requirements for recertification are listed in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-976-161. These requirements consist of annual education, and education that must be obtained during a person’s certification period. Although this specific education requires people to maintain competence in these topics and skills, the requirements also provide a total number of course hours for each certification level that must be completed. People participating in the OTEP method must meet these requirements; however, because of the competency-based nature of OTEP, fewer class hours may be needed to complete these requirements than the total course hours indicated.

This document provides information and guidelines about both the CME and the OTEP methods of obtaining the required education for recertification in Washington.

General education requirements for recertification

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-976-161 provides general education requirements for EMS provider recertification. It identifies WAC 246-976-162 CME method and WAC 246-976-163 OTEP as the two pathway for providers to renew their EMS certification.

WAC 246-976-162: The CME method for recertification

1. The continuing medical education (CME) method is the completion of education courses after initial certification to maintain and enhance skill and knowledge to meet educational requirements, both annual and per certification period, for recertification identified in WAC 246-976-162.
2. CME requires the successful completion of a written and practical skills certification examination as part of the recertification requirements.

CME content

1. Must meet annual and certification period educational requirements.
 - a. Cognitive, affective and psychomotor topics for the level of certification. In the following core content areas:
 - 1) Cardiovascular
 - 2) Airway /ventilation
 - 3) Medical emergencies/behavioral
 - 4) Trauma
 - 5) Obstetrics and pediatrics.
 - 6) Operations.
 - b. County medical program director (MPD) protocols, regional patient care procedures, and county operating procedures.
2. Education content must be approved by the county MPD.
3. Nationally recognized training programs may be used as CME for content.

EMS certification renewal by CME

1. Complete and document educational requirements appropriate to the level of certification WAC 246-976-162.
2. Complete and document skill maintenance requirements for level of certification identified in WAC 246-976-162.
3. Complete cognitive and psychomotor examination.
4. Complete the Department of Health requirements for recertification/renewal in WAC 246-976-162 and certification requirements identified in WAC 246-976-141.

WAC 246-976-163: The OTEP method of recertification

Ongoing training and evaluation program (OTEP) method is a program of education for EMS personnel, approved by the MPD and the Department of Health to meet the education requirements and core topic content for recertification. OTEP includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor evaluations following completion of each topic presentation to determine student competence of topic content.

OTEP content:

1. Must meet annual and certification period educational requirements:

- a. Cognitive, affective and psychomotor topics for the level of certification being taught in the following core content areas:
 - 1) Cardiovascular
 - 2) Airway /ventilation
 - 3) Medical emergencies/behavioral
 - 4) Trauma
 - 5) Obstetrics and pediatrics.
 - 6) Operations.
 - b. County medical program director (MPD) protocols, regional patient care procedures, and county operating procedures.
 - c. OTEP must include evaluations to determine the student competence of those cognitive, affective and psychomotor covered, following the completion of each topic presentation.
2. Education content must be approved by the county MPD.

EMS recertification renewal by OTEP

1. Complete and document department- and MPD-approved OTEP that includes requirements indicated in WAC 246-976-163 to include cognitive, affective and psychomotor evaluations, appropriate to your level of certification.
2. Complete and document skill maintenance requirements for level of certification identified in WAC 246-976-163.
3. Complete the Department of Health requirements for recertification/renewal in WAC 246-976-163 and certification requirements identified in WAC 246-976-141.

Changing recertification methods

1. Any EMS provider may elect to obtain education requirements through the OTEP method by successfully completing all requirements of an MPD- and DOH-approved OTEP.
2. If all OTEP requirements are not completed, people must successfully complete the Washington state written examination and practical skills examination as identified in WAC 246-976-162 to be recertified.

OTEP program development

This section provides the guidelines to develop an OTEP that meets minimum state standards and provides information to assist in the continual improvement of existing training programs.

An agency conducting an OTEP will need instructor/evaluator personnel. During an OTEP, EMS personnel must complete and demonstrate competency in skills contained in the Washington state-approved curricula for their certification level and other approved topic content.

EMS evaluators are used to evaluate these practical skills and to determine each person's competency on each skill covered during the OTEP.

General guidance

EMS Agency Involvement: - If an EMS agency decides to conduct an OTEP it must:

1. Have currently certified EMS providers
2. Have county MPD- and DOH-approved evaluators and instructors
3. Develop a training program following educational requirements for the recertification of EMS personnel, using topic content identified below.
4. Complete the [OTEP application](#), DOH Form 530-010
5. Obtain OTEP approval from county MPD and DOH

Evaluators must:

1. Be a currently certified EMS provider who has completed at least one certification cycle. Certification must be at or above the level of certification being evaluated.
2. Complete an MPD-approved evaluator workshop, specific to the level of certification being evaluated that teaches proficiency in using skill evaluation forms identified below.
3. Complete the [evaluator application](#), DOH Form 530-086.
4. Be approved by the county MPD and DOH

Instructors shall:

1. Be a currently certified EMS provider who has completed at least one certification cycle at or above the level of certification being taught.
2. Be a currently approved evaluator at the level of certification being taught.
3. Be approved by the county MPD to instruct and evaluate EMS topics
4. Guest instructors, when used, must have specific knowledge and experience in the skills of the prehospital emergency care field for the topic being presented and be approved by the county MPD to instruct EMS topics.

Medical program director (MPD) responsibilities:

1. OTEP instructors and evaluators.
2. OTEP for EMS provider recertification.
3. Recommendation of recertification of EMS providers to DOH

Remediation plan

1. Remedial Training - If an EMS provider is unable to demonstrate knowledge and skill competency, he or she may receive remedial training as determined by the MPD.

Quality improvement plan

1. The key to a successful OTEP is periodic assessment of instructors and evaluators. Following are several suggested approaches to establish an in-house quality assessment (QA) program in training and evaluation:
 - a. Conduct peer evaluations of CME instructors and evaluators. Sample peer review forms are available upon request from the Education, Training and Regional Support Section.
 - b. Whenever possible involve the MPD or delegate in training or evaluation sessions.
 - c. Periodically survey EMS personnel about the strengths, weaknesses of the OTEP and suggestions for improvement.

Reapproval of OTEP

1. Substantive changes to the approved OTEP require documented approval from the county MPD and DOH.

Training, CME, and skills maintenance documentation form

[DOH 530-022](#) may be used for the documentation of initial training, continuing medical education (CME), ongoing training and evaluation programs (OTEP), and skills maintenance.

The documentation and retention of original training completion documents is the responsibility of each certified person.

EMS Evaluator Workshops

The purpose of evaluator workshops is to teach methods and techniques to enable people to provide reliable, objective practical skill evaluations while properly using evaluation skill forms identified by the Department of Health.

EMS evaluator workshops must be conducted by people experienced in EMS practical skill instruction, demonstration and evaluation, such as senior EMS instructors or other people approved by the medical program director.

EMS evaluators must attend an update class during the recertification period.

The EMS evaluator workshop guidance document, curriculum, and PowerPoint are available on the [DOH website](#).

National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) Reregistration Requirements:

Many people in Washington State maintain NREMT credentials exclusively or in addition to Washington state EMS credentials.

NREMT has two method of recertification: retest by exam and NCCP method. Find more information at www.NREMT.org

Education requirements obtained to meet Washington's standards may be used to meet NREMT reregistration requirements. For additional information, review the [Guideline for state and local topics areas for NREMT NCCP recertification DOH 530-206](#)