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# Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

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## **EMT-Paramedic Program**

Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) has offered continuous Emergency Medical Services (EMS) training at the EMT-Basic level for at least 30 years. Starting in the mid-1990s, the institution would occasionally offer an EMT-Paramedic class based on student demand. These classes were held infrequently, usually every three to four years.

Changes occurred in 2009 when a new building was constructed on the Ankeny campus to house the programs in the Health and Public Services Department. It was during this time that an advisory committee was formed to study the feasibility of offering an EMT-Paramedic class on a regular, full-time basis. After much research, the decision was made to propose the program, based on anticipated student and employer demand. The Iowa Department of Education approved the program, and the first class was offered in the fall term of 2010. Instructor Eric Anderson and program medical director Dr. Rachael Sokol were hired in the summer of 2010.

When the initial program began in the fall term of 2010, it consisted of eight students with various EMS backgrounds. Since that first class, five subsequent EMT-Paramedic classes have been held at DMACC. Enrollment in the EMT-Paramedic program has steadily increased over the years, and the current class has 20 students.

In addition to the 46-credit-hour EMT-Paramedic certificate program, DMACC also offers students an opportunity to obtain their AAS in Emergency Medical Services. The AAS program consists of an additional 22-26 credit hours of coursework and gives students a choice of three tracks of study. These tracks include EMS Management, Fire Science, and a Clinical Emphasis.

From the beginning, the mission of the DMACC EMT-Paramedic program has been to provide a quality EMS education for healthcare professionals. The curriculum is based on a format required by the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) that is similar to paramedic programs across the country. Additionally, the DMACC EMT-Paramedic program has received its initial accreditation through the Committee on Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP) and is expecting to become fully accredited in early 2016.

Once students successfully complete the EMT-Paramedic course, they are eligible to sit for the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technician (NREMT) written and practical examinations. Once these exams have been passed, the student is eligible to work as a paramedic virtually anywhere in the United States. The attrition rate in both the certificate and degree programs is very low, and approximately 90% of the graduates in each class are employed as paramedics within six months of completing the program.

Since the beginning of the program, the only full-time faculty member has been the program chair, Eric Anderson. During this time, Dr. Sokol has continued in her position as the program's medical director. Her roles include oversight of the program as well as acting as a liaison between the program and the medical community. Another important aspect that contributes to the success of the EMT-Paramedic program is its advisory committee. The individuals who serve as members include professionals from the

public safety community, including EMS, fire, and law enforcement. Additional members include nurses, physicians, and medical educators, as well as the dean of the DMACC Health and Public Services department. The advisory committee meets twice each year and reviews curriculum as well as student performance. The members also provide suggestions on how to improve the program.

The biggest challenge facing the EMT-Paramedic program during the first several years of its existence was how to increase enrollment. This has become less of an issue the past year as the program has established itself in the EMS community. Enrollment has steadily increased over the past two years and this trend is expected to continue in the upcoming academic year. One of the future challenges facing the program will be how to deal with this increased enrollment and whether or not there will be a need to offer additional paramedic classes in order to meet the needs of potential students.

*Created August 2015 in celebration of DMACC's 50th Anniversary.*