



State of Maryland

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Services Systems**

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February 19, 2020

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings  
Maryland General Assembly  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

By Hand

Re: Follow-up Information for SB 454 – Public Safety – Mandatory Mental Health Training  
– First Responders and Law Enforcement Officers

Dear Chairman Smith:

Please accept this supplemental information, which was requested by committee members subsequent to my testimony regarding SB 454 on February 13, 2020. Specifically, I was asked to provide information about mental health-oriented training and education for Maryland's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

As I testified, MIEMSS believes that the state's EMS personnel, both career personnel and thousands of volunteers, already receive initial and recurrent education that is commensurate and appropriate for the missions they are intended to serve. Further, EMS personnel education is founded in national educational standards that prepare students to pass their national certification tests. Recurrent continuing education is required of EMS clinicians to maintain competencies and state certification/licensure. It is also our means of ensuring compliance with statewide protocol innovations as the science of emergency medical care changes.

EMS educational programs and content are approved by the State EMS Board under its existing statutory authority. SB 454 in its current form complicates lines of authority and responsibility to identify EMS educational priorities and sanction delivery formats.

It seems noteworthy that the preponderance of support for SB 454 is from the perspective of about law enforcement officers. MIEMSS takes no position on the application of the bill's requirements as it relates to law enforcement personnel.

MIEMSS believes that the training and education of EMS personnel throughout Maryland, which has been approved by the State EMS Board, provides the necessary and appropriate preparation to respond to mental or behavioral health emergencies. Consequently, we believe that SB 454, as it pertains to EMS first responders, is unnecessary.



## **Initial Training of EMS Personnel in Psychiatric Emergencies**

All levels of EMS personnel receive initial training about responding to and treating individuals presenting with psychiatric emergencies. This training complies with National Education Standards approved by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which sets national education standards for EMS personnel. The State EMS Board, which is statutorily responsible for setting educational requirements for EMS personnel in Maryland, has adopted the national standards for use in EMS educational programs in Maryland. Attached are relevant pages from the national standards which specify the instructional guidelines for EMS educational courses specific to Psychiatric Emergencies.

**Emergency Medical Responder (EMR).** The Emergency Medical Responder initiates immediate lifesaving care to critical patients who access the emergency medical system. This individual possesses the basic knowledge and skills necessary to provide lifesaving interventions while awaiting additional EMS response and to assist higher level personnel at the scene and during transport. Emergency Medical Responders function as part of a comprehensive EMS response, under medical oversight. Emergency Medical Responders perform basic interventions with minimal equipment. Think of the EMR as a firefighter or an assistant on an ambulance. Emergency Medical Responder educational training in Maryland involves 50 classroom hours. Psychiatric emergencies are part of the required curriculum. See Attachment 1.

**Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).** The Emergency Medical Technician provides basic emergency medical care and transportation for critical and emergent patients who access the emergency medical system. This individual possesses the basic knowledge and skills necessary to provide patient care and transportation. Emergency Medical Technicians function as part of a comprehensive EMS response, under medical oversight. Emergency Medical Technicians perform interventions with the basic equipment typically found on an ambulance. The Emergency Medical Technician is a link from the scene to the emergency health care system. Think of the EMT as the clinician on a basic life support ambulance; capable of initiating CPR, delivering oxygen, splinting injured extremities, controlling bleeding, and providing safe transportation to emergency treatment facilities. Emergency Medical Technician training in Maryland involves 165 classroom hours. Psychiatric emergencies are part of the required curriculum. Note that the guidelines include all the topics and material from the lower-level EMR curriculum plus the additional material specified. See Attachment 2.

**Paramedic.** The Paramedic is an allied health professional whose primary focus is to provide advanced emergency medical care for critical and emergent patients who access the emergency medical system. This individual possesses the complex knowledge and skills necessary to provide patient care and transportation. Paramedics function as part of a comprehensive EMS response, under medical oversight. Paramedics perform interventions with the basic and advanced equipment typically found on an ambulance. The Paramedic is a link from the scene into the health care system. Think of the paramedic as the most advanced EMS clinician, capable of initiating intravenous access, administering protocol-identified medications, and resuscitating patients in cardiac arrest. Paramedic training in Maryland involves 1,100 classroom hours. Psychiatric emergencies are part of the required curriculum. Note that the guidelines include all the topics specific to the Paramedic-level, plus the Advanced EMT (which is not a level licensed in Maryland). See Attachment 3.

## **Testing for EMS Certification / Licensure in Maryland**

After completing the required course work, those wishing to be certified / licensed as an EMS clinician in Maryland must successfully complete testing by the National Registry for Emergency Medical



Technicians, which is the national testing body for EMS personnel throughout the country. National Registry testing encompasses all types of emergencies that EMS is likely to encounter, including psychiatric emergencies. In other words, psychiatric emergencies are part of the core content of EMS educational programs and core to certification examinations.

### **Continuing Education, Protocol Updates and Renewal of Certification or Licensure**

After initial certification / licensing, EMS personnel must meet continuing education requirements and complete at least annual updates to the Maryland Medical Protocols in order to be eligible for renewal of their certification or licensure.

- Protocol Updates – MIEMSS protocols specify how EMS personnel are to provide care for specific types of emergencies. In interacting with and providing care to behavioral health emergency patients, the protocols provide that all EMS personnel use the “SAFER” model which calls for EMS personnel to:
  - Stabilize the situation by containing and lowering the stimuli
  - Assess and acknowledge the crisis
  - Facilitate the identification and activation of resources (chaplain, family, friends or police)
  - Encourage the patient to use and take action in their best interest
  - Recovery or referral – leave the patient in care of responsible person or professional or transport to appropriate facility.

Additionally, the Protocols provide specific instructions on dealing with critical behavioral health emergencies, such as excited delirium.

- Continuing Education – There are a variety of courses and conferences from which EMS personnel may choose to meet continuing education requirements, including courses provided by EMS jurisdictions and statewide EMS conferences. The following continuing education courses have been offered in the past two years: six (6) courses on Mental Health / Behavioral / Psychiatric Emergencies; two (2) courses on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); three (3) courses on Suicide; two (2) courses on Excited Delirium; two (2) courses on Mental Health for First Responders / EMS Providers and one (1) course on Stress; one (1) course on Emerging Drugs of Abuse; one (1) course Group Crisis Intervention; and one (1) course on Psychiatric Safety and Transport.
- Statewide Conferences – Statewide EMS conferences also provide EMS personnel the opportunity to gain continuing education credits on a variety of emergencies that they respond to. The following behavioral health topics have been offered at recent statewide conferences: PTSD and Suicide; Suicide Prevention; Opioid Addiction; Dementia and Addiction; Suicide Response.

MIEMSS believes that the training and education provided to EMS personnel throughout Maryland, which has been approved by the State EMS Board, provides the necessary and appropriate medical training for our personnel to respond to and treat patients with behavioral health emergencies. Consequently, we believe the SB 454 – as it pertains to EMS – is unnecessary. As noted in my testimony, MIEMSS takes no position on the application of the bill’s requirements to law enforcement personnel. See Attachment 4 for MIEMSS’ position paper and suggested amendment to address our concerns.

I hope you find this information helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions or if we may provide additional information. We look forward to working with the Committee and Senator Pinsky on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore Delbridge', written in a cursive style.

Theodore Delbridge, MD, MPH  
Executive Director

Cc: Members, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky