

Expanding Work-Based Learning

How Fire Departments Can Expand High School EMT Training



Goal

Expand Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) high school training by encouraging adoption of models established by the Le Mars and Waukee Fire Departments in partnership with school districts and community colleges. Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and the Iowa Department of Education (IDoE) are collaborating with the Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association and Iowa Fire Chiefs Association to encourage more communities with capacity to consider this approach and build upon training opportunities already offered by community colleges and other providers.

Background

EMT training opens the door to a critically important career and serves as a gateway to other occupations, such as firefighters, paramedics, nurses and physicians. It also prepares volunteers for rural communities. In 2024, Iowa reported its first increase in total active Emergency Medical Services (EMS) clinicians since 2018, but challenges remain. Meanwhile, in the 2024-25 school year, just 35 of Iowa's 304 school districts with high schools had students enrolled in EMT training, so many more students could benefit, if they had the option.

Why do this?

"You need to get more people involved. Start them young," said John MacGregor, Le Mars Fire Department Battalion Chief, who teaches the one-semester EMT training course. "The benefit is they get experience and exposure. And we learn as well."

How to get started?

The biggest lift is having someone willing to teach, and getting buy-in from the whole department, since they'll be out in the field with students, said MacGregor. Then ask your high school and community college if they are interested in the partnership.

To request a meeting or learn more about starting a partnership, please fill out the brief form. You can also visit our work-based learning website to learn more.



[Webform: How Fire Departments Provide High School EMT Training](#)



[Work-Based Learning in Iowa for Students and Adults](#)



[Contact the Iowa WBL Team](#)

Next steps if the fire department, community college and high school agree to partner:

- Instructors must be active Iowa-licensed EMS clinicians. Primary instructors must have the EMS Instructor Endorsement (EMS-I) and be aligned with the EMS Training Program that will be sponsoring the class.
- To obtain the EMS Instructor Endorsement (EMS-I), the EMS clinician must complete one of three programs: Fire Instructor I program, Iowa EMS Instructor curriculum, or NAEMSE Level I. The clinician also must be aligned with an Iowa authorized EMS training program and complete an Iowa Bureau of Emergency Medical and Trauma Services workshop.
- The EMS Training Program sponsoring the class – in this case a community college – will approve the course and appoint the instructor. That allows the course to generate dual credit, and schools to receive state supplementary weighting to help cover costs.
- Decide whether the class and related hands-on experience will take place at a fire station (Le Mars model) or whether the class will be taught on a high school campus with some hands-on experience at a fire station (Waukee model). All students also participate in field experiences to gain real-world skills under close supervision.



Questions

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