

LIFE SAVING. 
LIFE CHANGING.

Emergency Medical Services

PERSONNEL RETENTION GUIDE



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

The intent of this Emergency Medical Services Personnel Retention Guide is to provide tips to overcome the barriers identified through statewide research conducted in Q1 2023 with EMS prospects and employees. Please familiarize yourself with the content so you can share specific ideas and suggestions with personnel who express concerns or challenges they're experiencing.



EMS PERSONNEL RETENTION GUIDE

Our statewide research with EMS prospects, and panel discussions with EMS employees and agencies, highlighted the top retention barriers as follows:

Low salaries p. 4

Lack of understanding regarding the EMS career path p. 5

Lack of understanding regarding scholarships and/or other financial support for an individual to advance to the next level and earn higher pay p. 6

Lack of understanding regarding the benefits available p. 8
(may vary by employer)

Poor leadership p. 9

Poor workplace culture p.10

Burnout p.11

Lack of recognition p.12

Addendum p.14

LOW SALARIES



Most EMS personnel enter the field because they feel a calling to help their community. Regardless, their work can be physically and emotionally taxing. Recognizing the importance of EMS personnel and compensating them fairly is crucial to ensuring a well-qualified and well-staffed EMS response. Efforts to increase salaries for EMS personnel typically depend on various factors. These include state and local budget priorities, legislative initiatives and advocacy by EMS organizations and professionals. Salaries vary by region within Texas and can depend on local priorities and funding availability.

- **CAREER PATH:** Share the EMS career path chart (in the addendum on page 14) of commensurate salary increases by level.
- **FOUR-MONTH CERTIFICATION:** Emphasize that individuals can get certified in only four months. They can launch a career in EMS without having to go to college and avoid the high costs of a four-year school. Courses may be online or in person.
- **QUICK ENTRY:** Emphasize that the age requirement to start an EMS career is only 18 years old. As a high school graduate (or with a GED), individuals can start earning a salary with benefits in a job in EMS.
- **SALARY + BENEFITS:** Emphasize that individuals should look at their complete compensation package. This may include medical insurance, 401k retirement and other employment benefits.
- **WORK/LIFE BALANCE:** Emphasize the flexible work schedule that allows for paid time off as well as the ability to earn overtime.
- **PAY INCREASES:** Explain that as EMS personnel advance their certification, their salary increases. The pay increase from an EMT to a paramedic can range from 33% to 70% depending on the level of certification.
- **SCHOLARSHIPS:** Highlight that scholarships may be available to help cover education costs — or to advance certification to earn a higher salary.

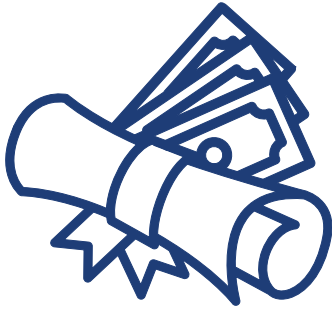
EMS CAREER PATH

Working in EMS is not a job; it is a career with potential for advancement and benefits. The career begins with certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT). From there, individuals can progress to an advanced EMT, paramedic, licensed paramedic and beyond. Outside of ambulance services, EMS professionals can work in various settings including hospitals, fire departments, government agencies, private companies and more.



- **CAREER PATH:** Share the EMS career path chart (in the addendum on page 14) of commensurate salary increases by level.
- **COURSE LENGTHS:** Explain that education courses to start as an EMT require as little as 150 hours and courses to advance from one level to the next can range from 250 hours to 1,000 hours.
- **SCHOLARSHIPS:** Highlight that scholarships may be available to help cover education costs — or to advance certification to earn a higher salary.
- **FOUR-MONTH CERTIFICATION:** Emphasize that individuals can get certified in only four months. They can launch a career in EMS without having to go to college and avoid the high costs of a four-year school. Courses may be online or in person.
- **QUICK ENTRY:** Emphasize that the age requirement to start an EMS career is only 18 years old. As a high school graduate (or with a GED), individuals can start earning a salary with benefits in a job in EMS.
- **LAUNCHING PAD:** Highlight that many individuals use EMS to launch a career in health care. They often advance to careers as nurses, physician assistants, doctors, flight paramedics, search and rescue — and more.
- **OTHER EMS ROLES**
 - **Dispatcher:** These individuals are responsible for receiving emergency calls. They assess the situation and dispatch appropriate resources like ambulances or first responders. They play a critical role in coordinating emergency responses.
 - **Emergency Medical Dispatcher (EMD) Instructor:** These individuals train dispatchers to handle emergency calls. They provide pre-arrival instructions and manage emergency resources efficiently.
 - **Manager/Supervisor:** EMS agencies require managers and supervisors to oversee daily operations. Duties include scheduling, staffing and budget management. They play a vital role in ensuring the smooth functioning of EMS services.
 - **Ambulance Fleet Maintenance:** These individuals ensure ambulances are in good working condition. They are responsible for repairs and maintenance.
- **EMS VOLUNTEERS:** Individuals can also choose to volunteer in their communities.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT



The health care field is dynamic and constantly evolving. EMS professionals must engage in ongoing education and training to stay up to date with the latest medical advancements. Texas has various scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs available for EMS personnel. These funds are available to individuals pursuing EMS education to enter the field and to advance in the health care profession. The availability and details of these programs can change over time so it's essential to check for the most current sources.

- Encourage personnel to visit [EMS.Texas.gov](https://www.EMS.Texas.gov) to learn about available scholarships — and for information about EMS education courses and providers.
- Individuals may contact their Regional Advisory Council (RAC) to learn about the possibility of receiving a Texas Senate Bill 8 (SB8) EMS Scholarship. Information is available at [EMS.Texas.gov](https://www.EMS.Texas.gov).
- **SCHOLARSHIP LEVELS**
 - **\$2,000 per student** who completes an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class including books, materials and one NREMT exam fee
 - **\$3,200 per student** who completes an Advanced EMT (AEMT) class including books, materials and one NREMT exam fee
 - **\$8,000 per student** who completes a paramedic class including books, materials and one NREMT exam fee
- **STUDENTS MUST COMMIT TO SERVING**
 - **For the \$2,000 scholarship** – One year as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
 - **For the \$3,200 scholarship** – Two years as an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT)
 - **For the \$8,000 scholarship** – Two years as a paramedic if upgrading their certification
- **FOR ALL SCHOLARSHIPS – Within 90 days of completing a DSHS approved EMS course, students must:**
 - Pass the National Registry examination
 - Complete the state certification process
 - Begin working or volunteering for a DSHS licensed EMS provider
- Some EMS students may receive a bonus for passing their certification exam on their first attempt. These policies and incentives can change over time. This makes it crucial to obtain current information directly from the EMS program or employer the student is interested in.
- Education courses may be online or in person.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

(continued)

Other EMS scholarships include the following: The eligibility criteria, application deadlines and availability of these programs can vary widely. It is important to research these organizations or institutions for the most current information.

- **WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS:** Workforce Solutions boards sometimes offer tuition assistance or reimbursement programs for EMS training. These programs are designed to help individuals in Texas gain the necessary skills for employment in high-demand fields like EMS.
- **LOCAL EMS AGENCIES AND ASSOCIATIONS:** Some local EMS agencies, organizations and associations offer scholarship or financial aid programs for EMS education.
- **MILITARY AND VETERAN BENEFITS:** Texas offers various educational benefits and financial assistance programs for veterans and active-duty military personnel. These can potentially be used for EMS education.
- **COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:** EMS education programs offered by community colleges and universities may include scholarships or information on tuition assistance.

EMS BENEFITS

The benefits and compensation provided by EMS agencies and employers vary. However, most offer:

- **HEALTH INSURANCE**
- **PAID TIME OFF**
- **RETIREMENT PLANS**
- **OVERTIME PAY**
- **FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE**

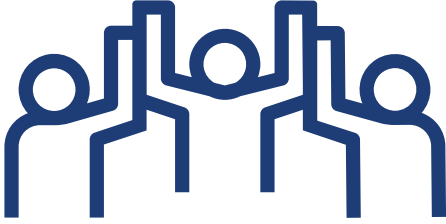
(Schedules can accommodate individuals with diverse lifestyles and commitments.)



Other benefits that should be taken into consideration include:

- **JOB STABILITY:** EMS positions are in high demand. The EMS field is relatively recession-proof.
- **CAREER GROWTH:** Share the EMS career path chart (in the addendum on page 14) of commensurate salary increases by level.
- **AI PROOF:** Artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to enhance various aspects of EMS. However, AI is unlikely to completely replace the work of EMS personnel because:
 - AI does not possess the judgment, critical thinking, adaptability, empathy and human touch required for patient interactions and care.
 - AI can process and analyze large volumes of data quickly. This can help assess patient trends and patterns, which can help EMS agencies optimize resource allocation. Human judgment is still crucial for patient interactions and complex, on-the-spot decision-making. AI struggles with handling unforeseen or non-standard scenarios.
- **LIFE-SAVING IMPACT:** EMS personnel play a crucial role in saving lives and providing immediate medical care during emergencies. This can be incredibly rewarding.
- **NOT MONOTONOUS:** EMS personnel encounter a wide range of medical situations, from trauma and accidents to medical emergencies. This variety keeps the job interesting and allows for continuous learning and skill development.
- **QUICK ENTRY:** Many EMS careers, such as EMT or paramedic, have relatively short training periods compared to other health care professions. This allows individuals to enter the field quickly.
- **TEAMWORK:** EMS personnel work closely with colleagues, including paramedics, EMTs, dispatchers, nurses and physicians. Strong teamwork and collaboration are essential in the field. This camaraderie is often appealing to individuals with a military background; EMS provides a similar structure and teamwork in the civilian world.

LEADERSHIP



Concerns about an organization or company's leadership are not isolated to any specific industries. When individuals bring forward concerns about leadership, they should be empowered with information to bring about positive change. Below are steps that should be considered:

- **ANALYSIS:** Identify the specific issue(s) that needs to be addressed. Is it a communication problem? A lack of transparency? Ineffective decision-making or something else? By clarifying the issue, it can be addressed more effectively.
- **DISCRETION:** Encourage the individual to approach the supervisor or person in leadership privately. The individual should act professionally and with the goal of having constructive dialogue. The individual should provide specific examples. It is important to use “I” statements to convey concerns without blaming or accusing. When discussing concerns, the individual should also bring constructive solutions.
- **PERSPECTIVE:** Consider asking the leader to gather feedback from others on the team to gauge if the concerns are widely shared.
- **DOCUMENT:** Keep a record of observations and meetings on the topic so the documentation can be leveraged, if needed, e.g., if the issue needs to be escalated.
- **DISPUTE RESOLUTION:** Some organizations have internal protocols, such as a conflict resolution process, to address workplace issues. Following these channels can provide support and guidance on how to address concerns about poor leadership.

If the above steps do not alleviate the individual's concern or if the issue(s) persists, they should be encouraged to speak to higher-level leadership, such as senior management or the executive team. Leadership can encourage the development of programs, such as team-building activities, to help address underlying issues and improve leadership within the organization. Addressing poor leadership takes time, professionalism and a positive attitude.

WORKPLACE CULTURE



Workplace culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, norms and behaviors of an organization. It represents the overall personality of the workplace. Workplace culture defines the way employees interact with each other, as well as with customers and others outside the organization. Positive workplace culture can lead to increased employee satisfaction and productivity. It can foster innovation, collaboration and a sense of purpose among employees. It can also help attract and retain talent, maintain a competitive edge and achieve long-term success. Conversely, a negative or toxic workplace culture can lead to low morale and high turnover. This can hinder the organization's ability to achieve its objectives.

When individuals bring forward concerns about workplace culture, they should be empowered to bring about positive change. Below are tips that should be considered:

- **VALUES:** Define the core principles and ethical standards that will guide decision-making as well as behavior within the organization. Ensure employees understand these values — and how exemplifying them will factor into reviews, compensation and opportunities for advancement.
- **LEADERSHIP:** The approach and behaviors of leaders can significantly influence the organization's culture. Leaders should strive to model the organization's values.
- **ANALYSIS:** Identify the specific concern(s) that needs to be addressed. Is the concern related to workplace behavior, diversity and inclusion, harassment or other? By clarifying the issue, it can be addressed more effectively.
- **DISCRETION:** Encourage the individual to approach the supervisor or person in leadership, privately. The individual should act professionally and with the goal of having constructive dialogue. The individual should provide specific examples. It is important to use "I" statements to convey concerns without blaming or accusing. When discussing concerns, the individual should also bring constructive solutions.
- **PERSPECTIVE:** Consider asking the leader to gather feedback from others on the team to gauge if the concerns are widely shared.
- **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY:** Empower employees to be agents for positive change and to "be" the change they want to see.
- **CULTURE PROGRAMS:** Support employees in setting up programs to improve workplace culture. Increase employee engagement by establishing a culture committee or activities like volunteering events.
- **STRENGTHEN CAMARADERIE:** Host bi-weekly company events, outings or happenings to encourage social interactions.
- **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION:** Express gratitude for employees who excel, put in long, stressful hours and exemplify the foundational pillars of working in EMS. Consider employee recognition programs and anniversary celebrations. (Please see page 12 for guidance on how to create an employee recognition program).
- **WORK ENVIRONMENT:** The physical workspace and atmosphere should be clean, welcoming and inclusive.
- **REPORTING CHANNELS:** The organization should have clearly communicated, formal reporting channels. These include anonymous hotlines or complaint mechanisms for employees to report concerns about violations of company policies, unethical behavior or other.

If the above tips do not address or alleviate the individual's concern about the organization's workplace culture, they should be encouraged to speak to higher-level leadership, i.e., senior management or the executive team. If initial conversations do not resolve the concern, the individual may consider reaching out to the Human Resources (HR) department or a higher-level supervisor to discuss their concerns and seek guidance. Collaborative efforts are often more effective than confrontation when addressing cultural issues within an organization.

BURNOUT



Combatting burnout is crucial for the well-being of EMS personnel and the quality of patient care. Burnout can result from the high-stress nature of the job, long hours and exposure to traumatic events.

The EMS Peer Referral Program is available to those in the EMS field who need help with substance abuse or mental health. The program is completely anonymous and the department will not be informed about who calls to receive help or treatment.

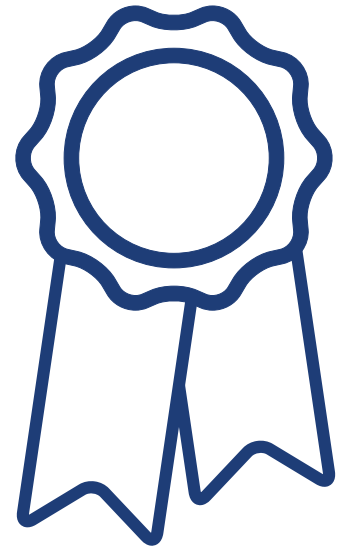
UT Health offers the Heroes Helpline (heroeshelpline.org) in conjunction with their Heroes First Responders Program (sbmi.uth.edu/ace/helpline.htm). For immediate help with substance use or mental health, call the Heroes Helpline at **1-833-EMS-inTX (1-833-367-4689)**. More information is available at **EMS.Texas.gov**.

Individuals should be encouraged to seek professional, mental health support if struggling with stress, anxiety or symptoms of burnout. Below are additional strategies to help combat burnout in EMS:

- **SELF-CARE:** Taking care of physical and mental health is essential. EMS personnel should give priority to self-care practices. These include regular exercise, healthy eating, hydration and adequate sleep. Relaxation techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness and meditation are also beneficial.
- **CREATE BOUNDARIES:** Individuals should set clear boundaries between work and personal life. They should ensure they make time for rest, relaxation and spending time with loved ones.
- **PEER SUPPORT:** Talking with coworkers who understand the challenges of the job can provide emotional support. After particularly stressful calls, debriefing sessions with colleagues can help individuals process the emotional impact and share coping strategies.
- **SHIFT SCHEDULING:** Individuals should avoid excessive overtime whenever possible and ensure they get adequate rest between shifts.
- **EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** Staying updated with the latest training and education in the field can help individuals feel more confident and competent in their role.

If the above tips don't help mitigate burnout, individuals should seek support from leadership within their EMS organization. They should communicate their concerns about burnout and work-related stressors. They should also inquire about policies to address these issues. If they feel the issues are systemic, they should consider advocating for changes within their organization or by seeking support from EMS associations. Burnout is serious and should be addressed proactively. By implementing these strategies and seeking support when needed, EMS personnel can reduce the risk of burnout. This is crucial to maintaining their well-being while delivering high-quality care to patients.

RECOGNITION



Employee recognition programs have a significant positive impact on both employees and organizations. They are important for organizations to have in place for the following reasons:

- **BOOST MORALE:** Recognition programs acknowledge employees' hard work and achievements. They boost morale and job satisfaction. Feeling appreciated and valued motivates employees to continue putting in their best effort.
- **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:** Recognized employees are more likely to be engaged in their work. They are more committed to their roles and often go the extra mile to contribute to the organization's success.
- **ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY:** When employees feel recognized and appreciated, they are generally more productive. They take pride in their work and strive for excellence, leading to increased efficiency and output.
- **EMPLOYEE RETENTION:** When employees feel valued, they are less likely to seek jobs elsewhere. This reduces turnover and the costs associated with hiring and training new staff.
- **TEAM MORALE:** When team members see their colleagues being rewarded, it can inspire a sense of camaraderie and motivation to excel as a group.
- **POSITIVE WORK CULTURE:** A culture of recognition promotes positivity and inclusivity within the organization. It encourages teamwork, cooperation and a sense of belonging among employees.
- **RECRUITMENT:** Prospective employees are more likely to choose employers who prioritize recognition and appreciation.
- **ALIGNMENT WITH ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS:** Recognition programs can be designed to align with specific organizational goals and values. This reinforces the importance of those goals and encourages behaviors that support them.
- **REDUCE STRESS AND BURNOUT:** Recognition can help reduce stress and prevent burnout. It reminds employees that their efforts are noticed and that their work is making a meaningful impact.
- **SENSE OF CONNECTION:** Today's evolving work environments can be dispersed, remote or hybrid. Recognition programs can help maintain a sense of connection among teams.

An easy way to implement an employee recognition program is by creating one that's aligned with your organization's values. Below are steps to get started:

- **DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES:** What do you hope to achieve? This could include increasing employee morale, improving performance, enhancing teamwork or reinforcing company values.
- **OBTAIN LEADERSHIP SUPPORT:** Ensure senior leadership understands the benefits of the program and is also willing to allocate resources to it.
- **CREATE A RECOGNITION PROGRAM COMMITTEE:** Include representatives from different departments. This brings diverse perspectives to design, implement and manage the program.

RECOGNITION

(continued)

- **DETERMINE RECOGNITION TYPES:** Recognition can take various forms. This includes verbal praise, written notes, awards, bonuses or public ceremonies. Decide what types of recognition will be included in the program. Consider sharing success stories. Recognize outstanding employees during team meetings, company newsletters or on a recognition board.
- **DETERMINE REWARD TYPES:** Choose appropriate rewards or incentives that align with employees' preferences and motivations. Options include cash bonuses, gift cards, plaques, extra time off or experiences. Be mindful of legal and ethical considerations. These include tax implications of rewards, privacy and fairness in the recognition process.
- **SET A BUDGET:** Determine the approved budget for the program. Outline costs for rewards, events and administrative expenses.
- **ESTABLISH CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES:** Create clear and transparent criteria for recognition. Determine the behaviors, achievements or milestones that qualify for recognition. Be specific to avoid ambiguity. Consider peer-to-peer recognition, which can be as impactful as recognition from supervisors.
- **DESIGN A ROLLOUT PLAN:** Develop a communication plan to inform employees about the recognition program. Explain its purpose, how it works and the criteria for receiving recognition.
- **LAUNCH THE PROGRAM:** Officially launch the program with a kick-off event or announcement. Involve senior leaders in this launch to emphasize the program's importance.
- **IMPLEMENT A TRACKING SYSTEM:** Determine how the organization will document employee recognition. This will ensure consistency and fairness in the recognition process. Continuously gather feedback from employees to assess the program's effectiveness and make improvements.
- **EVALUATE AND ADJUST:** Regularly evaluate the program's impact on morale, performance and retention. Adjust the program as needed to address changing organizational goals or employee needs.

Employee recognition should be an ongoing initiative that is a consistent part of an EMS agency's organizational culture. The key is to create a program that genuinely celebrates and appreciates the contributions of your workforce.

Another way to recognize employee achievements is to reach out to Texas EMS Trauma News for inclusion in that publication. For questions, comments or suggestions about Texas EMS Trauma News, please write EMSTraumaNews@dshs.state.tx.us.

ADDENDUM

LIFE SAVING. * LIFE CHANGING.

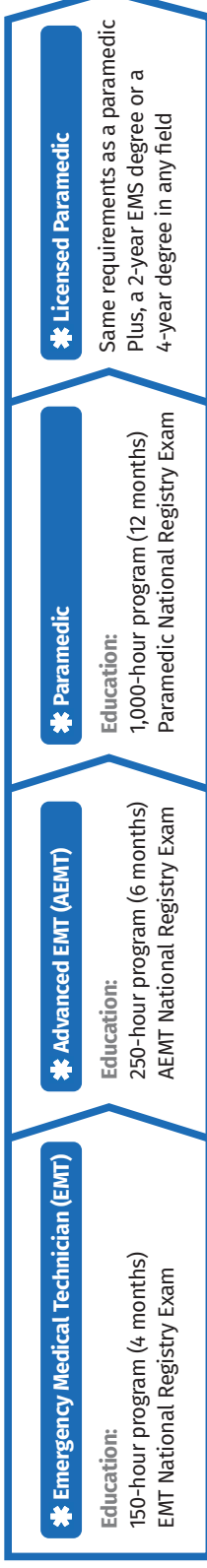
Emergency Medical Services

TEXAS EMS CAREER PATH *

EMS offers career advancement and benefits. Start with certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT). From there, progress to an advanced EMT, paramedic, licensed paramedic and beyond. Ask about available scholarships to help cover education costs.

Base Requirements

- 18+ years old
- High school diploma or GED
- Pass EMS certification exams in English



Salary increases from an EMT to a paramedic can range from 33% - 70% depending on the level of certification.

CERTIFICATION STEPS

- 1) **EDUCATION:** Complete a nationally accredited education program for your chosen level of EMS certification.
- 2) **EXAM:** Pass the National Registry Exam for that certification.
- 3) **APPLICATION:** Submit the Texas application for EMS Personnel Certification which requires a background check.
- 4) **CERTIFICATION:** Once approved, receive your Texas EMS certification in the mail in two weeks, or sooner online.

OTHER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

- EMS Instructor
- EMS Operator
- Health Care Provider
- Fire Rescue

EMS provides the necessary experience to advance into other careers.

Education, certification and salary information is specific to Texas.



Learn more at [EMS.Texas.gov](https://www.EMS.Texas.gov)



ANEXO

SALVA VIDAS. * **MEJORA LA TUYA.**

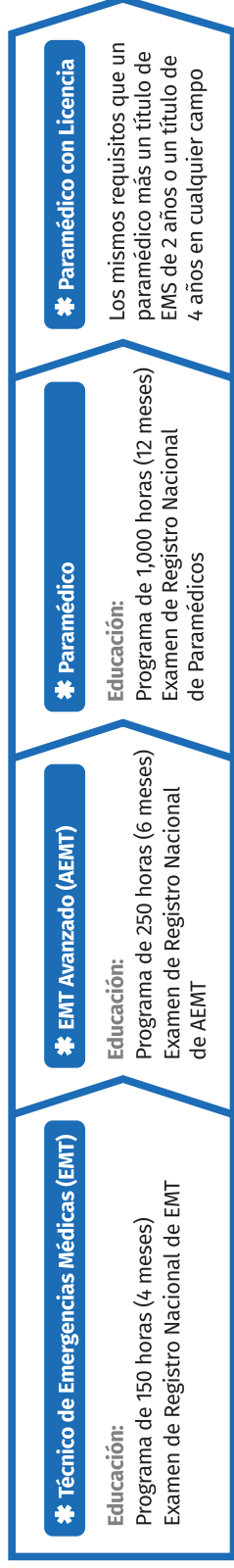
Servicios Médicos de Emergencia

*** TRAYECTORIA PROFESIONAL DE SERVICIOS MÉDICOS DE EMERGENCIA (EMS) DE TEXAS**

EMS ofrece avances profesionales y beneficios. Comienza con tu certificación como técnico de emergencias médicas (EMT). Luego progresa a ser un EMT avanzado, paramédico, paramédico con licencia y más. Pregúnta sobre las becas disponibles para ayudar a cubrir los costos de educación.

Requisitos básicos

18+ años
Diploma de escuela secundaria o GED
Aprobar los exámenes de certificación de EMS en inglés



El aumento en salario de un EMT a un paramédico puede variar entre el 33% al 70%, según el nivel de certificación.

PASOS DE CERTIFICACIÓN

EDUCACIÓN: Completa un programa educativo acreditado a nivel nacional para el nivel elegido de certificación en EMS.

EXAMEN: Pasa el Examen de Registro Nacional para dicha certificación.

SOLICITUD: Envía la solicitud de Texas para la certificación de personal de EMS que requiere una verificación de antecedentes.

CERTIFICACIÓN: Una vez aprobada, recibe tu certificación de EMS de Texas por correo en dos semanas, o antes en línea.

OTRAS OPORTUNIDADES PROFESIONALES

Instructor de EMS
Operador de EMS

Proveedor de atención médica
Rescate de incendios

EMS proporciona la experiencia necesaria para avanzar hacia otras carreras.

La información sobre educación, certificación y salario es específica de Texas.



Aprende más en **EMS.Texas.gov**

Questions?

Is there a specific concern not mentioned in this guide that you would like to discuss? Please reach out to **Texas DSHS EMS and Trauma Systems** at **Team-Texas-EMS@dshs.texas.gov**.