

## Chad Blosser

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**From:** Chad Blosser  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 10, 2020 2:43 PM  
**To:** 'Chad.blosser@vdh.virginia.gov'  
**Cc:** 'Akers, Deborah'  
**Subject:** ACE Division Update for Education Coordinators - COVID-19

**This is a blanket e-mail message to all certified Education Coordinators and ALS Coordinators.**

Dear Education Coordinator,

Due to the recent up-tick in inquiries to the Office in reference to COVID-19, we are providing the following guidance to each of you with regard to how to handle COVID-19 related institution closures and possible quarantining of individuals or groups of individuals. Borrowing from the Committee on Accreditation for the EMS Professions (COAEMSP), we offer the following Virginia specific advice.

It appears as though many educational institutions and/or local EMS programs are in the process of planning and making decisions on how best to respond to the impact of COVID-19. Since the spread of COVID-19 is continuing, please know the Office of EMS is here to assist you as you work through this public health crisis. We will work with our programs and individual students (providers) to help them navigate issues that impact their education and certification in Virginia.

As an Education Coordinator in Virginia, ultimately, you are responsible for the process of planning and deciding how best to respond to the ever changing COVID-19 crisis in your area of the Commonwealth. We encourage you to refer to these helpful resources for the latest information on coronavirus:

- [WHO](#)
- [CDC](#)
- [NHTSA's Office of EMS](#)
- [US Department of Education](#)
- [Virginia Department of Health](#)
- [Virginia Office of EMS](#)

For programs in the clinical or capstone field internship phase, decisions made *may* impact the students' graduation/completion date. Factors to consider include but are not limited to:

- increasing the use of simulation; however, capstone/field internship team leads **cannot** be accomplished with simulation
- meeting with your Operational Medical Director to discuss options for continued learning
- extending the students' learning timeline
- following your local public health authority
- following your program's and institution's protocols
- implementing the academic continuity plan for your program
- utilizing other clinical or capstone field internship affiliations that are accepting students
- meeting your institutional requirements for potentially extended graduation for all students

If your program or an individual student is suspended from clinical and capstone field internship sites, and no other sites are available, then follow the program's action plan for students who do not meet the program's established minimums for patient contacts/skills. It will be important to document that if the institution is closed, skills labs and simulations will not be available.

Programs are encouraged to move forward using **temporary**, commonsense approaches without Office of EMS guidance or approval. Since 2015, when the Office of EMS removed all hour's requirements for initial certification programs, your use of online content for initial certification programs is not monitored or limited.

- You are however required to meet, face-to-face, for the number of hours listed on your course approval as "Program Length".
  - Should you need to adjust your "Program Length" to account for an increase in online content due to your program being shut down due to institution closing (e.g. community colleges or colleges and universities closing) or you make the decision to stop meeting in person for a period of time, please reach out to Tracie Jones via e-mail and request a change in your "Program Length".
  - Please note, changes in "Program Length" will affect the 85% attendance requirement for all initial certification programs, so you should carefully consider a change in these hours.

However, regardless of how you plan to make these changes to your program, you should be prepared to provide the Office of EMS with evidence demonstrating which locations, clinical sites and students were directly impacted and the length of the disruption due to COVID-19.

As of this time, the Office will not be granting blanket variances from the EMS Rules and Regulations for EMS initial certification or continuing education programs in Virginia.

For students in initial certification programs who are directly affected by being unable to complete:

- clinicals within 180-days of the end date of a course; or
- initial certification testing at the BLS level with 180-day of being marked as passed (e.g. either the cognitive or psychomotor)

They should be directed to apply for a variance with the Division of Regulation and Compliance through their online variance request form which can be found at: <https://vdhems.vdh.virginia.gov/emsapps/exceptions.html>.

Students/providers needing continuing education should be made aware of the plethora of online CE resources available to them on the OEMS website: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/education-certification/provider-resources/web-based-continuing-education/>

The Office will not be offering any blanket variances to EMS providers who cannot obtain their recertification requirements due to COVID-19 as we have a number of online options available to them which do not require breaking quarantine protocols.

Again, we would like to reiterate that Education Coordinators are encouraged to move forward using **temporary**, commonsense approaches without Office of EMS guidance or approval. Just make sure that you have detailed documentation of all actions you take in relation to COVID-19 in case you are questioned by OEMS staff or are visited by a member of the Division of Regulation and Compliance.

Thank you for all you do! Stay safe, be well and above all else, please wash your hands!

Regards,

Chad

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