

Virtual Instructor-Led Training Policies and Guidelines

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Background

In 2020, when the World Health Organization declared a worldwide pandemic, the Division of Accreditation, Certification, and Education proactively relaxed requirements for initial certification programs for four years to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

During this initial period of transformation and change, one conspicuous area in need of nationwide reform was the delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) continuing education, which had largely remained unchanged for nearly 50 years. Virginia, long recognized as a progressive leader in EMS throughout the country, was well-positioned to drive dynamic change in EMS education by reaching out to national organizations and contacts at the National Registry.

After several months of collaboration and consultation with multiple medical directors, EMS educators, and Office of EMS (OEMS) staff, the OEMS announced the Commonwealth's recognition of a new training modality—Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT)—for Category 1 continuing education hours.

The Virginia OEMS considers VILT continuing education offered under the guidance of this document to be F5 education, as defined by the Commission for Accreditation of Pre-Hospital Continuing Education (CAPCE).

This document has been developed to provide you with the necessary information to begin offering VILT for continuing education of EMS providers in the Commonwealth. It outlines the requirements, guidelines, and best practices for delivering high-quality, engaging, and effective virtual training that aligns with the standards set forth by the OEMS and CAPCE.

Guiding Principles

- **Establish and maintain Regular Effective Contact:** Regular effective contact is a requirement for distance learning. Instructors must keep in contact with students on a regular and timely basis both to ensure the quality of instruction and to verify performance and participation status.
- **Create opportunities for student-centered learning:** In distance education, instead of being the sole source of content knowledge, the role of the educator should transition to that of a facilitator allowing students to interact with the content and instructor.
- **Create opportunities that have practical real-world applications:** The activities in the virtual environment should be authentic, that is, based on tasks that students would have to perform in various settings in the real world. Students should also have chances to enhance their knowledge about the world through critical thinking and reasoning skills.
- **Ensure all course content is readily and easily accessible to all students:** Instructors should create course content and assessments that are user-friendly in terms of technology.

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT)

Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) technology is based on comprehensive and scalable collaboration software that features robust functionality, high availability, and ease of use. It offers a full range of engagement tools, typically including live conversation, chat, polls, quizzes, and other interactive elements, all controlled and monitored by facilitators. This environment also incorporates tools for webinars, remote labs, and video conferencing.



VILT activities are accepted as equivalent to traditional in-person classes by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) and, as such, require adherence to the standards set by the Commission for Accreditation of Pre-Hospital Continuing Education (CAPCE). VILT programs must provide synchronous interaction between students and instructors, whereby the educator can verify student attendance throughout the activity. For each topic covered, students must achieve a satisfactory score on the summative exam.

Compared to traditional classroom or asynchronous online programs, VILT requires different approaches. It must provide mechanisms for frequent communication between instructors and students and maintain engaging and collaborative content. The content must be developed to maximize student engagement, with visuals and interaction being paramount to promote engagement and increase the effectiveness of the training being offered.

Facilitators, whether trained educators or subject matter experts, must also possess strong communication skills to deliver high-quality VILT education. One of the biggest challenges in VILT education is the failure of facilitators to effectively interact with students and manage their virtual classrooms.

Office of EMS Requirements to Offer VILT

The following are new OEMS policies which have been incorporated in the [Training Program Administration Manual](#) (TPAM).

Definitions

Education Coordinator – An individual who is certified in Virginia as an Education Coordinator.

ALS Coordinator – An individual who is endorsed in Virginia as an ALS Coordinator.

Educator – The individual who is conducting (e.g. teaching) the VILT course. This person may be an Education Coordinator or may be a “qualified” instructor, specializing in the content or certified at or above the level of CE awarded in the course.

Facilitator – A facilitator is a trained instructor or subject matter expert in the use of VILT technologies. This individual must also be skilled communicators in order to maintain control, serve as the emcee for the program and manage all the technical hurdles so the educator can focus on content and course delivery. The principal limitations to successful VILT implementation are the failure of facilitators to interact with students and manage VILT classrooms effectively.

Platform - VILT technology is based on comprehensive and scalable collaboration software that features functionality, availability and ease of use. A full range of engagement tools typically includes live conversation, chat, polls and quizzes, all controlled and monitored by facilitators. Leading VILT platforms also incorporate tools for webinars, remote labs and video conferencing.

F5: Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) Continuing Education – The Virginia Office of EMS continuing education offered under the guidance of this document to be F5 education as defined by the Commission for Accreditation for Pre-Hospital Continuing Education (CAPCE).



Burden of Proof

Educators choosing to offer F5 Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) Continuing Education acknowledge that the burden of proof for meeting the requirements of this type of education lies with the educator who announced the program.

Course Requests

A VILT course request must be made by a certified Education Coordinator or endorsed ALS-Coordinator through the Virginia EMS Portal and submitted at least 15 days prior to the first scheduled course.

- Each class must be announced individually with the exception of a structured BLS or ALS continuing education program.
 - Example: A structured BLS or ALS CE program would be one that meets each week or month on the same day, at the same time, on the same platform with the same group of students.
 - If utilizing a standardized course outline, a schedule of classes with the access link and/or OEMS specific user credentials to the training platform must be attached to the course announcement.

Enrollment Maximums

There are no limits on the enrollment for a VILT continuing education course. Educators choosing to offer VILT education are responsible for ensuring and verifying student engagement, participation, attendance and successful completion.

Delivery Platform Requirements

Computer network and internet access equipment necessary to ensure advertised accessibility must be maintained and supported properly and allow for:

- Mandatory session recording.
- Electronic storage of test results, scores and other evaluation materials.
- Storage for three years that are adequately protected with appropriate backup and security from unauthorized access.
- Student accessibility of all browsers, plug-ins and technical requirements prior to the class.
- Display of the real-time presentation of instructional graphics, interactive polling, instructor feedback and other items made necessary by the specific delivery platform.

Instructor/learner interactions must be possible in real time via simultaneous visual and audio communication during the session. Chat-based interfaces may be used for housekeeping or support actions, but all learning activities must support real time audio. The delivery platform must track total time spent in the learning session and provide a method of generating reports verifying attendance and activities for each participant.



Educator Requirements

The educator conducting (e.g. teaching) the program shall be certified or licensed at or above the level of the continuing education being offered as required by EMS Regulation 12-VAC5-31.

Facilitation of VILT Programs

In addition to the educator presenting the course material, the VILT program must have a facilitator who will serve as the classroom manager, course emcee, monitor the chat box, administer polling questions, observe webcams, and verify/monitor attendance in the program—from the beginning of the program to the end of the program.

Program Tools

It is strongly encouraged that the education program utilize the various tools (e.g. online chat rooms, participant polling, cold calls, quizzing) available to offer an effective and engaging presentation.

Program Access for OEMS

Per EMS Regulations, the Office of EMS has the ability to monitor a program unannounced. Therefore, the access link and/or OEMS specific user credentials to the training platform shall be provided for each program. This includes the date and time the class will be offered.

Course Evaluations

All Education Coordinators who use VILT are encouraged to develop a course evaluation to be sent to the attendees to determine the effectiveness of the education delivered. Many of the LMS systems have this available that would allow your participants to provide an anonymous response.

Submission of Continuing Education (CE) Hours

The Education Coordinator/ALS-C announcing the program is responsible for the submission of CE earned for the program.

- CE must be submitted within 15 days of the course offering.
 - This will require the educator to develop a roster, generate the barcode and scan and upload the CE hours.

Metrics Are Key to VILT

It is incumbent on Education Coordinators/ALS-Coordinators, as the provider of Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) education, to make EMS providers choosing to participate in VILT aware of what measures are being used to monitor their participation and engagement while taking your training programs.

At the completion of each session it is suggested that the educator employ the use of a survey tool to gauge audience feedback and for QA purposes.



Education Coordinators/ALS-Coordinators should consider monitoring certain metrics before determining whether to award CE to a participant. Some sample metrics are listed below:

- **Engagement Count** – did the student actually engage in the training through questions and/or polling.
- **Time in Session** – did the student arrive on-time for the training and stay through the entire training program
- **Student Interest Rating** – did the student show interest in the program by remaining engaged and following along
- **Student Attentiveness** – did the student maintain the course window on top of all other open applications or did the student switch to other windows (e-mail, Internet browser, Word, PowerPoint, etc.) during the presentation.

Student Expectations

Education Coordinators/ALS-Coordinators, as the provider of Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) education, should ensure that EMS providers are made aware of any expectations the educator has for their participation. At a minimum, students should be expected to adhere to some basic online education requirements—some specific examples of student expectations are listed below:

- VILT programs are designed for individuals, not groups, squad training nights or families. The individual who registered for the program is the only person who can receive CE credit.
 - No displaying or streaming of the content on a projector, TV screen or multiple monitors in order for multiple other people to receive CE credit for the program.
- Register in advance for the program to ensure timely delivery of confirmation e-mails with specific information on how to join the training session.
 - If you learn that you cannot attend, kindly cancel your reservation to free up a spot for another provider who may be seeking to attend.
- Join the scheduled training session at least 5 minutes in advance of its start. In some cases, you will need to download software and install it on your computer in order to access the webinar.
 - You will enter a waiting room until the training session begins.
- Make sure you have your mic and web-camera turned on for the entire duration of the training.
 - When you first join, you will be muted along with all other attendees automatically by the software.
 - The course facilitator will activate control of your microphone and/or camera as needed during the presentation.
- Pledge to actively participate in the program through the polls and by asking questions if necessary.

Awarding of Teaching Hours for Educators

Education Coordinators are eligible for teaching hours for the specific Category 1 content you deliver via VILT ONLY. EMS Regulations do not allow the awarding of teaching hours for Category 2 content, educator prep time, grading quizzes, facilitating VILT programs, etc.



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