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# Why is Education Important in EMS?

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### **Why is Education Important in EMS?**

Education. It is a word that we, as humans, thrive from. We learn to read, to write, and to interact within society. We learn from successes and failure. We learn by taste, touch, sight, feel, and what we hear. We learn every day, and are constantly adjusting who we are based on what we experienced yesterday. In EMS, education is vital. As prehospital healthcare providers, we must constantly be educating ourselves on the advances and changes that are made within our protocols and by research. Frequent renewal deadlines for the licenses we hold are put in place so that we remain competent in our skills and are up to date to the most current of standards. There is another factor to our professional need for education, and that is community education. By educating those around us, we can be a means of prevention. While EMS is our career and passion, we want nothing more than to aid in the prevention of life threatening illness and injury from ever happening.

Being involved in the community we work in is a key element to this. There are countless opportunities out there, we must take advantage of them. As a part of the public service triad, we are seen by the public as professionals that are there to help. We get noticed when we walk into a store in uniform, or get gas in-between transfers. Most of the time, we are seen as people to be respected. This gives us the opportunity to educate others simply within our actions. If we choose to talk on our cell phone while driving, a bystander may see this as an

acceptable action and find themselves doing the same. This can apply to wearing a seat belt, driving safely, and controlling ourselves appropriately within public situations.

There are opportunities to educate others that we can purposely seek out as well. CPR education courses are always needed, and we can help teach these or get licensed to teach them ourselves. Teaching first aid to workplaces that contain heavy machinery, AED usage to teachers, and blood pressure screenings in public places are all ways we can be involved within our community. Children, especially, are eager learners and can greatly be impacted by what they see. Even the youngest of children can be taught to call 911. Elementary students can learn how to stop major bleeding or help a choking friend. Pre-teens can be taught CPR, especially at the age where they begin babysitting or caring for younger siblings alone. These are all ways to provide both prevention and education. If we teach children first aid from a young age, the older they get the more they can build on. By high school, they may show interest in EMS and getting first responder or EMT training. The more we encourage healthcare education, the greater the reach we may see.

This fall, I had the opportunity to put on a “teddy bear clinic” for a group of 45 preschoolers. While these children were only 3 and 4 years old, they still are able to learn. We discussed calling 911 and knowing their parents phone numbers or addresses. We practiced putting bandages on their teddy bears and taking their vitals with real medical equipment. We read books about going to the doctor and about ambulances. By making them comfortable and familiar with medical equipment, if they should ever find themselves in an emergency situation they may feel less scared. At only four years old, many of them aspire to be doctors and nurses. Letting them play doctor on their very own toys further brought interest in this field. My hope is

that inspiration continues, as we could never have enough healthcare providers in our country.

At the end of their time with me, they each got to decorate and take home their own first aid kit full of band aids, gauze pads, and a few other supplies. We talked about the difference between taking care of “boo-boos” and real emergencies. This helps to prevent unnecessary 911 calls that are sometime made by children. It is important to teach children to call 911, as emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time. A child may find himself home alone with a parent who has a medical emergency. On the other hand, they need to be taught that a bumped knee or a sick pet are not reasons to call. This plays into the education and prevention importance.

Children are like sponges, and they are leaning hundreds of things per day. If EMS takes a special focus on educating children of all ages, we may see injury trends decline and preventable accidents decrease. By being involved in our community and being aware of education opportunities, our impact on individuals will go beyond how they see us in an emergency situation. When we put a focus on education, we have the potential to save lives without a person ever needing to call 911 because of the prevention strategies we teach.