



EMT's and Paramedics: Their Role at Camp

We understand that it can be challenging to find a registered nurse (RN) for camps and therefore, camps often look to hire an EMT or paramedic in place of the RN to provide health services. This can create several challenges which are important for camps to understand.

1. **Comparing Apples to Oranges** – An EMT/Paramedic scope of practice is quite different than a RN. The EMT receives a certification to perform a variety of emergency assessment and care procedures. The RN receives a license that outlines their scope of nursing practice to include nursing assessment, medication management, communicable disease planning, documentation, delegation, and screening activities.

2. **Independence** - An EMT/Paramedic is authorized to work under the medical license of a physician at their respective employer. The RN is able to practice in a variety of different settings (i.e. hospitals, long-term care, schools, industry, camps) and has the ability to provide nursing services as outlined in their scope. EMT/Paramedics and RNs must follow the directions of a prescriber when giving medications in any environment.

3. **Preparation** - EMT/Paramedics and RNs have different levels of training. While EMT's can get a certification in 12-24 months, RN's must complete nursing programs taking 2-6 years depending on their level of operation. Therefore, the EMT cannot take the place of an RN at camp as the training and education does not match the training of an RN and does not address the most common practices in a camp setting (screening, delegation, documentation, medication management, communicable disease management).

4. **Considerations: Legal and Safety** - If a camp wishes to use an EMT at camp, there are important considerations:

The EMT would need to function under the direction of an RN who would delegate healthcare tasks to the EMT. The EMT would function as an unlicensed assistive personnel (UAP) and not as an EMT. Please note that everyone would need a clear understanding that the EMT would not be operating as an EMT, but rather as a helper to the RN at camp. UAPs can perform tasks (and only tasks) as delegated by the RN. This could be helping to hand out medications, taking vital signs, applying bandaids or whatever the RN deems is appropriate to delegate to an individual.

For the safety of campers and staff, the UAP cannot make decisions based on healthcare information or assessment data received. For example, if a UAP takes a temperature and the temperature is 100.6, it would be the RN's responsibility to know what to do to respond to the fever, initiate medical procedures as outlined in their protocols, and conduct nursing procedures

specific to the RN scope of practice. Professional RN education gives direction regarding a variety of interventions, treatment, and nursing care procedures to address injury and illness concerns and therefore must be the responsible party for intervening on behalf of a camper or staff. Please see the ACN delegation practice guideline for further information (<https://campnurse.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Delegation-PG-March-2017.pdf>).