

PPSC EMT-Paramedic

Functional Job Analysis

Paramedic Characteristics

The Paramedic must be a confident leader who can accept the challenge and high level of responsibility the position entails. The Paramedic must have excellent judgment and be able to prioritize decisions and act quickly in the best interest of the patient; must be self-disciplined, able to develop patient rapport, interview hostile patients, maintain safe distance, and recognize and utilize communication unique to diverse multicultural groups and ages within those groups. Must be able to function independently at optimum level in a non-structured environment that is constantly changing.

Even though the Paramedic is generally part of a two- person team generally working with a lower skill and knowledge level Basic EMT, it is the Paramedic who is held responsible for safe and therapeutic administration of drugs, including narcotics. Therefore, the Paramedic must not only be knowledgeable about medications but also able to apply that knowledge in a practical sense. Knowledge and practical application of medications include thoroughly knowing and understanding the general properties of all types of drugs including analgesics, anesthetics, antianxiety drugs, sedatives and hypnotics, anti-convulsants, central nervous stimulants, psychotherapeutics which include antidepressants, and other anti-psychotics, anticholinergics, cholinergics, muscle relaxants, anti-dysrhythmics, anti-hypertensives, anticoagulants, diuretics, bronchodilators, ophthalmics, pituitary drugs, gastro-intestinal drugs, hormones, antibiotics, antifungals, anti-inflammatories, serums, vaccines, anti-parasitics, and others.

The Paramedic is personally responsible, legally, ethically, and morally for each drug administered, for using correct precautions and techniques, observing and documenting the effects of the drugs administered, keeping one's own pharmacological knowledge-base current as to changes and trends in administration and use, keeping abreast of all contraindications to administration of specific drugs to patients based on their constitutional make-up, and using drug reference literature.

The responsibility of the Paramedic includes obtaining a comprehensive drug history from the patient that includes names of drugs, strength, daily usage, and dosage. The Paramedic must consider that many factors, based on the history provided, can affect the type of medication to be given. For example, some patients may be taking several medications prescribed by several different doctors, and some may lose track of what they have or have

not taken. Some may be using non-prescription/over the counter drugs. Awareness of drug reactions and the synergistic effects of drugs combined with other medicines and, in some instances, food, is imperative. The Paramedic must also take into consideration the possible risks of medication administered to a pregnant mother and the fetus, keeping in mind that drugs may cross the placenta.

The Paramedic must be cognizant of the impact of medications on pediatric patients based on size and weight, special concerns related to newborns, geriatric patients, and the physiological effects of aging, such as how skin can tear in the geriatric population with relatively little to no pressure. There must be an awareness of the high abuse potential of controlled substances and the potential for addiction; therefore, the Paramedic must be thorough in report writing and able to justify why a particular narcotic was used and why a particular amount was given. The Paramedic must be able to measure and re-measure drip rates for controlled substances/medications. Once medication is stopped or not used, the Paramedic must send back unused portions to the proper inventory location.

The Paramedic must be able to apply basic principles of mathematics to the calculation of problems associated with medication dosages, perform conversion problems, differentiate temperature reading between centigrade and Fahrenheit scales, be able to use proper advanced life support equipment and supplies (i.e. proper size of intravenous needles) based on patient's age and condition of veins, and be able to locate sites for obtaining blood samples and perform this task, administer medication intravenously, administer medications by gastric tube, administer oral medications, administer rectal medications, and comply with universal precautions and body substance isolation, disposing of contaminated items and equipment properly.

The Paramedic must be able to apply knowledge and skills to assist overdosed patients to overcome trauma through antidotes, and have knowledge of poisons and be able to administer treatment. The Paramedic must be knowledgeable as to the stages drugs/medications go through once they have entered the patient's system and be cognizant that the route of administration is critical in relation to the patient's needs and the effect that occurs.

The Paramedic must also be capable of providing advanced life support emergency medical services to patients, including conducting and interpreting electrocardiograms (ECGs), electrical interventions to support cardiac function, performing advanced endotracheal intubations in airway management and relief of pneumothorax, and administering appropriate intravenous fluids and drugs under the direction of an off-site designated physician.

The Paramedic is a person who must not only remain calm while working in difficult and stressful circumstances, but must be capable of staying focused while assuming the leadership role inherent in carrying out the functions of the position. Good judgment, along with advanced knowledge and technical skills, is essential to directing other team members to assist as needed. The Paramedic must concurrently be able to provide top-quality care, handle high levels of stress, and be willing to take on the personal responsibility required of the position. This includes not only the legal ramifications of precise documentation, but also the responsibility to use the knowledge and skills acquired in real life-threatening emergency situations. The Paramedic must be able to handle adverse and often dangerous situations, including responding to calls in districts known to have high crime and mortality rates. Self-confidence is critical, as is a desire to work with people, solid emotional stability, a tolerance for high stress, 5 and the ability to meet the physical, intellectual, and cognitive requirements demanded by this position.