



Melissa McNally

Position Sought: Gulf Coast Region Director

Candidate Q&A

1. How would you describe your leadership style, and how has it influenced your work in EMS?

My leadership is purpose-driven, collaborative, and grounded in advocacy. I believe leadership is not defined by the position you hold, but by the difference you make—bringing people together around a shared vision and turning that vision into action.

These beliefs have directly shaped how I have approached my work in EMS. I have consistently sought opportunities not only to lead, but to develop others through education, mentorship, professional development, and involvement in professional organizations. I believe our profession becomes stronger when we create opportunities for others to grow, lead, and contribute.

My focus on the future has also influenced my work in EMS education, workforce development, professional associations, and advocacy. Rather than focusing only on today's challenges, I have worked to strengthen the structures that will support EMS tomorrow—improving education, developing future leaders, increasing professional engagement, strengthening our collective voice, and advancing recognition of EMS as an essential part of healthcare.

I have also learned that meaningful change requires more than identifying problems. It requires action. Throughout my EMS career, I have been willing to bring stakeholders together, ask difficult questions, challenge established approaches when necessary, and move conversations toward solutions.

Ultimately, these principles have given my work a consistent purpose: to advocate for the EMTs and paramedics serving our communities today while creating greater opportunities for those who will follow them. I want EMS professionals to have a voice in the decisions that affect their careers and a profession that provides them opportunities to grow, lead, and succeed.

My goal has never been simply to participate in the future of EMS, but to strengthen our collective voice and help build an EMS profession that is stronger tomorrow than it is today.

2. In what ways do you advocate for EMS? What strategies would you recommend for NAEMT to strengthen its advocacy efforts and gain recognition for EMS as an essential service?

My advocacy for EMS is grounded in the belief that EMTs and paramedics must have a strong voice in the decisions that shape our profession and the communities we serve. I advocate for EMS through legislative engagement, professional representation, education, leadership development, and efforts to increase recognition of EMS as an essential component of healthcare and public safety.

Through my involvement with EMS professional organizations, including the Florida Association of EMTs and Paramedics, I have focused on building a stronger collective voice for EMS professionals. I believe membership and grassroots involvement are critical because policymakers need to hear directly from the people providing care in the field. Also, with my work supporting EMS educators, advancing

professional development, and preparing the next generation of EMTs and paramedics reflects my belief that investing in our people strengthens not only our profession, but ultimately the quality of care we provide to our communities.

To strengthen its advocacy efforts, NAEMT should make national recognition of EMS as an essential healthcare service a top priority. EMS is far more than transportation. We deliver emergency healthcare, respond to disasters, address behavioral health needs, support public health, serve rural and underserved communities, and provide critical care when patients are most vulnerable. Recognition as essential must ultimately translate into sustainable funding, appropriate reimbursement, workforce investment, and policies that reflect the true value of EMS.

NAEMT should expand grassroots advocacy by continuing to develop a strong national network of EMS advocacy ambassadors prepared to engage legislators, participate in legislative visits, provide testimony, and tell the story of EMS within their communities. Advocacy should not rest solely with association leaders; EMTs and paramedics should be empowered to understand that their voices can directly influence the future of their profession.

Finally, NAEMT must combine strong data with compelling personal stories. Policymakers need to understand not only what EMS costs, but what EMS contributes—and what communities stand to lose when their EMS systems are inadequately supported.

NAEMT has the national voice and reach to help change the conversation. Our goal should be clear: EMS is not simply a service communities utilize; it is an essential healthcare service communities cannot afford to be without.

3. How can NAEMT better support and develop the EMS workforce, considering generational differences? How would you convey the value of membership to both current and prospective members?

I believe NAEMT has an important role in strengthening and developing the EMS workforce by recognizing that we have multiple generations working side by side, each bringing different experiences, expectations, skills, and perspectives to the profession. Rather than viewing generational differences as a challenge, I believe we should use them as an opportunity to strengthen EMS.

NAEMT can support the workforce by developing programs that connect experienced providers with newer members through structured mentorship and leadership development. Experienced EMTs and paramedics have valuable knowledge that cannot always be learned in a classroom, while newer generations bring technology skills, new ideas, and different perspectives on communication and professional development. Creating opportunities for these groups to learn from one another can improve retention, engagement, and professional growth.

When conveying the value of NAEMT membership, I would focus on what membership does for the individual member as well as for EMS as a whole. Membership provides education, professional resources, networking, leadership opportunities, advocacy, and a collective voice for EMTs and paramedics. However, I believe the most important message is that membership gives EMS professionals a seat at the table.

For current members, I would demonstrate that their membership is an investment in their career and in the future of EMS. I would encourage them to become active participants rather than simply holding a membership. For prospective members, I would emphasize that joining NAEMT connects them to a national professional community that is working to improve the profession, influence policy, advance education, and strengthen the EMS workforce.

I would also make membership relevant to every generation by communicating through multiple platforms and providing opportunities for members to engage in ways that fit their needs. Whether someone is a new EMT, an experienced paramedic, an educator, or an EMS leader, they should be able to see themselves and their future within NAEMT.

Ultimately, my message is NAEMT membership is not just about belonging to an organization—it is about investing in yourself, supporting your profession, and having a voice in the future of EMS.

4. What is a pressing issue currently facing EMS, and how could NAEMT help address it?

One of the most pressing issues facing EMS today is the recruitment and retention of a strong, qualified, and engaged workforce. EMS professionals are being asked to do more in an increasingly complex healthcare environment while facing challenges related to compensation, staffing, burnout, education costs, career advancement, and professional recognition. If we do not address these issues, the ability of EMS systems to provide timely, high-quality care will continue to be at risk.

I believe NAEMT is uniquely positioned to lead this effort because it represents the professionals who know EMS best. By giving those professionals a stronger voice, investing in their development, and advocating for the value of their work, NAEMT can help build a stronger and more sustainable EMS workforce for the future.

Recruitment alone will not solve our workforce challenges. We must address why experienced professionals leave by advocating for competitive compensation, healthier working conditions, provider wellness, sustainable funding, and stronger career pathways.

In doing so, NAEMT must continue to lead nationally in strengthening and sustaining the EMS workforce. That begins with recognizing EMS as a professional healthcare career, one that offers meaningful opportunities for advancement, leadership, specialization, and lifelong learning.

NAEMT must also ensure EMS professionals are recognized for the value they bring to our healthcare system and communities. Every day, EMTs and paramedics manage complex medical emergencies, trauma, behavioral health crises, and disasters long before patients reach the hospital.

As an NAEMT Board member, I would support stronger professional development, mentorship, leadership opportunities, and grassroots advocacy. We must empower EMS professionals to tell their stories and ensure policymakers understand both the value of a strong EMS workforce and what communities stand to lose when that workforce is not adequately supported.

Our goal should not simply be to recruit the next generation of EMS professionals—it should be to build a profession where they choose to stay.