



Brian Stennett

Position Sought: Great Plains Region Director

Candidate Q&A

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

I enjoy leading through teamwork and teaching. I was taught, and fully believe, that is my role to learn the job of those above me and teach my job to those around and below. Learning and practicing our chosen topic together makes everyone better. I have high expectations of myself but I also realize not everyone has those same expectations. EMS education didn't cease when EMT or paramedic class ended. That's where it began. One of the hardest hurdles of mentoring, whether it is a new employee, a seasoned employee, or a peer, is determining if a deficiency, that I perceive, is a failure to meet a basic expectation or is failure to excel. I personally want each and every person I work with to want to excel but the challenge is to foster an environment that breeds that drive, not demands it. That sets our providers up for success rather than disappointment. In EMS, we recognize those challenges and have been working around the country to elevate the level of service that we bring to the community. That has taken many forms, from Community Paramedicine, to disaster medicine and in-hospital paramedics, and everything in between. My leadership style works well in developing those opportunities to learn, foster relationship with other stakeholders and grow our footprint in the community. That drive has led for my own opportunities to be a part of the NAEMT EMS Disaster Committee (formerly), now the EMS Disaster Committee, and serve as the Vice-Chair, which has been an honor. I have also had the privilege to serve as an instructor at the FEMA Center for Domestic Preparedness, bringing infectious disease and CBRNE response education to many students around the country over the last 5 years. It is my goal to continue to increase opportunities for learning, that will grow EMS, in my own community and through service and advocacy with NAEMT.

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 career has taken a focus in a few niche areas, infection control and emergency preparedness. In Illinois I was part of a group with the Northwest Community EMS System that worked with that leaders to draft a revision of Illinois State Statute 410 ILCS 305/7) (from Ch. 111 1/2, par. 7307) which allows for access to source patient testing for EMS and law enforcement and does not require informed consent to obtain the testing. This was a move forward in access to information that dictates the outcome of an occupational bloodborne exposure. This work led to me obtaining a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology and getting involved with the National Association of Public Safety Infection Control Officers (NAPSICO). With NAPSICO I was involved in the team that wrote the IBSC board exam for Designated Infection Control Officer which advocates for an elevated level of education for those that manage an agencies exposure control plan and infectious disease management. Also with NAPSICO, I worked to provide commentary on the OSHA proposed Emergency Response Standard which will replace 29 CFR 1910.156 (Fire Brigade Standard). Many of the proposed changes had significant impact on EMS as a whole as well as occupational exposure management. Through the NAEMT EMS Disaster meetings, I have been involved in drafting position papers for NAEMT regarding several initiatives over the many years of my involvement and I look forward to continue doing that

work. The best way to make change is to get involved and bring the issues to those that can implement the change and I believe I have made a strong effort to do that throughout my career.

As a Board Director for NAEMT, it would be a primary responsibility to listen to what the providers in my region need, and to advocate for those issues to the best of my ability. One of the things I think is an area of opportunity is to bring awareness to lawmakers about what it is that we do in EMS. I want to take a page from the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF). They have implemented a program called Fire Ops 101, where local, state or federal lawmakers are invited to a one day training where they are given hands on opportunities to see what firefighters do. That includes putting on the gear and doing parts of the job. To see and feel it, not just hear about it. I want to put the same tools in your hands, to give our lawmakers a mini-lesson on what it is like to stop bleeding, perform CPR, move someone in a stair chair through a tight hallway, in the dark. That experience is a great opportunity to highlight and educate on what we do day-in and day-out in our communities. That type of advocacy is invaluable and could make a positive impact on the needs of the EMS community.

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?

Much of the conversation I have seen around EMS workforce issues lately seem to have centered around education requirements. For example, should there be a Master's prepared paramedic level, similar to a Nurse Practitioner? The larger issue is that opportunities for career growth and additional pathways are needed and should be explored, but they may not be for every clinician. The International Board of Specialty Certifications is currently developing a Hospital Paramedic credential, specific to emergency or critical care areas, where practice is similar but significantly different than working in the back of an ambulance. Increasing awareness of these types of niche roles and opportunities, and strengthening NAEMT partnerships with other associations and advocacy groups is a path for NAEMT to support that workforce group. Generational differences aren't about having a management plan for Gen X vs Gen Z, it's about managing with varied expectations of career development, technology, motivation and connection across the entire workforce. I will work with the board to ensure we are working on multiple pathways to engage, educate, develop leadership and offer professional development and mentorship opportunities.

Membership in NAEMT isn't just about getting the sticker and going to a conference, although I proudly have the sticker on my water bottle and thoroughly enjoy the networking and educational opportunities a conference brings. But it's also about the community development at the local, state and federal levels. Membership supports the EMS community, opens up pathways to new educational opportunities and ways to get involved, but also gives opportunity to shape that education or advocacy effort. Sometimes professional growth isn't about the promotion, it's about getting together in person or on a virtual call with like-minded people to discuss something you are passionate about. I found that in the NAEMT EMS Disaster group and NAEMT offers many similar opportunities.

Ultimately, I see NAEMT's value as being both professional and personal. The organization's membership joins to help build careers and find opportunity to help build the future of EMS.

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

While we work as a profession on educational and career opportunities, we need to continue to work on recruitment, retention and career migration. A 2025 study from the American Ambulance Association on turnover found that 26% of turnover in EMS organizations occurred in the employee's first year.

The first NHTSA DOT curriculum in 1971 brought growth of EMS and set the foundations and cultures of what EMS is today. Many, if not most, of those first EMT's and paramedics have left the workforce. At the same time, the population aged 60 and older continues to grow, while younger generations are smaller and entering the workforce with different demographic characteristics. We will soon see an increased need for healthcare as an aging population requires more care and becomes a much larger percentage of the overall population than it was before. This means greater demand for EMS while having a smaller pool of potential providers available to fill those positions. In addition, public expectations of EMS have never been higher, and the work to become recognized as an essential service is increasingly more important.

All of this leads to a need to grow the EMS workforce, not just maintain current numbers. Efforts to increase access, such as high school EMT programs are a great opportunity to establish EMS as a destination career path before young adults reach the workforce. We must continue our efforts to reduce burnout, reduce mental fatigue and limit other detriments inherent of the job, that lead to early departure from EMS into other careers.

NAEMT specifically can advocate for support into career education models such as Career Technical Education high school programs, and partner with SkillsUSA or other organizations that support early exposure to EMS careers. NAEMT can also help address retention by promoting career pathways that allow experienced clinicians to continue growing within EMS, whether through specialty practice, education, leadership or other opportunities. This gives clinicians reasons to stay engaged in the profession even when their career takes them beyond traditional field EMS.

This paired with established NAEMT programs, such as the Lighthouse Leadership program, that mentor up-and-coming leaders, are great ways to make an impact on the workforce. Any opportunity to grow the footprint of these programs and efforts should be pursued as an organization.

Ultimately, I think NAEMT has an opportunity to help EMS recruit the next generation, retain the people we have, and provide pathways for experienced clinicians to continue contributing to the profession. We need to build a workforce that is not just large enough to meet today's needs, but prepared to meet the needs of the communities we will serve in the future.