



2025 Board Election: Candidate Q&A

Candidate Name: Daniel W. Linkins, MPH, NRP, NCEE

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

- My leadership style is best described as one of proactive service and initiative. Rather than waiting for direction, I'm driven by identifying unmet needs and taking action to address them. This philosophy is rooted in the belief that when "somebody needs to do something," I am somebody. My career in EMS isn't a result of personal ambition, but a direct consequence of this principle—each step was a response to a systemic need I observed.
- This approach has shaped my professional journey from a field provider to a regional director. As a provider, I recognized the need for higher-quality patient care and became a training officer to mentor and develop my peers. When I saw the need for a stronger talent pool, I transitioned into a program director role to ensure we were attracting and preparing more qualified professionals. Most recently, I identified the need for more cohesive collaboration across agencies and with state offices, prompting me to become a regional director.
- Ultimately, my leadership is a commitment to making the EMS system better for those I serve and those who will follow. I aim to inspire a mission of service that goes beyond individual aspirations, fostering a culture where every person feels empowered to take ownership and contribute to a stronger, more resilient system.

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 centered on education and proactive leadership, not just legislative lobbying. I engage with the public and local government leaders to shed light on the realities of our profession, including the challenges we face and the true costs of providing service. I use platforms like business associations, community initiatives, and public outreach to build relationships and raise awareness.
- A key part of my strategy is to prompt deeper thought among stakeholders, from frontline providers to national leaders. I encourage a shift in perspective from simply reacting to 911 calls to building a comprehensive, integrated healthcare system. I believe that sustainable growth depends on recognizing the value of our work, not just increasing the number of providers. By highlighting what it truly takes to deliver timely, qualified care, I advocate for a future where EMS is properly supported and valued. My goal is to help everyone, from the public to policymakers, become better champions for our profession.
- To strengthen its advocacy efforts and gain recognition for EMS as an essential service, the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) should adopt a

multi-pronged strategy that leverages its unique position and addresses the core issues facing the profession.

- **Elevate the Narrative Beyond "More Paramedics":** NAEMT should champion a new, more comprehensive narrative. Instead of just focusing on workforce shortages and the need for more personnel, the message should shift to the value-based compensation and the critical need for a higher standard of care. By highlighting the complexity of modern EMS—including mobile integrated healthcare (MIH) and the value of prehospital care—NAEMT can make a stronger case for professionalizing the field. This reframing will make a more compelling argument for increased funding and better wages.
- **Implement a Unified, Data-Driven Public Education Campaign:** The general public's lack of understanding about EMS is a major hurdle. NAEMT should launch a well-funded, nationwide public education campaign that goes beyond typical "EMS Week" celebrations. This campaign should use clear, compelling data and personal stories to show the public what it truly takes to deliver EMS. It should highlight the costs of training, equipment, and the system infrastructure required for a single call. This would help build grassroots support and inform elected officials and community leaders.
- **Forge Deeper Strategic Alliances:** NAEMT should continue to build and strengthen alliances with other key players in the healthcare and public safety sectors. By presenting a united front and sharing a common message, NAEMT can amplify its voice and exert greater influence on legislative and policy decisions. This is particularly important for gaining essential service status, as it requires broad political and public support.
- **Create a "Legislative Engagement Toolkit":** To empower members at the local level, NAEMT should develop an easy-to-use legislative toolkit. This resource would provide members with pre-written talking points, templates for letters to local and state officials, and step-by-step guides for effective advocacy. This would democratize advocacy, enabling every provider to become an ambassador for the profession and translate their on-the-ground experiences into compelling policy arguments.

3. How can NAEMT better support and develop the EMS workforce, particularly newer generations? How would you convey the value of membership to both current and future members?

- To better support and develop the EMS workforce, NAEMT must re-center its mission around the individual provider. The association needs to make a clearer distinction between advocating for agencies and advocating for the provider, ensuring that the latter is the priority. This involves listening to the concerns of providers and understanding the reasons they leave the profession. Additionally, NAEMT should champion the value of the EMS profession itself, creating a future where providers see a clear and rewarding career path without feeling the need to leave for other healthcare fields.
- To effectively support and develop the EMS workforce, NAEMT should focus on the following strategies:
 - **Prioritize the Individual Provider:** NAEMT must explicitly and consistently demonstrate that it serves as the advocate for the EMS provider, not just the EMS agency. This can be achieved by launching a campaign that highlights how NAEMT's advocacy efforts—such as pushing for better wages, benefits, and working conditions—directly benefit the individual EMT and paramedic. When faced with decisions that benefit agencies but may harm providers, NAEMT must

have clear, transparent conversations with its members about the potential trade-offs.

- Listen to Understand, Not Just to Hear: NAEMT needs to create and utilize dedicated channels for authentic listening. This could include conducting regular, nationwide surveys, hosting "town hall" style forums, or creating a permanent advisory council of frontline providers. The goal is to understand the "why" behind provider turnover. It's not enough to celebrate when a paramedic becomes a nurse; we must investigate if they are running toward a new opportunity or running away from a toxic work environment. Understanding these motivations is crucial for addressing the root causes of burnout and attrition.
- Champion the Value of the Profession: NAEMT must lead the charge in redefining the public perception of EMS. Providers are not at the "bottom of the healthcare chain"; they are highly trained practitioners who work in austere and challenging environments. NAEMT should highlight this unique expertise through public relations campaigns and by working with other healthcare organizations to establish bilateral career pathways.
- To convey the value of membership, NAEMT should focus on clear messaging and tangible benefits.
- For Current Members: NAEMT can retain its current members by showing them the direct return on their investment through regular updates on legislative victories, showcasing how their dues contribute to advocacy efforts for better wages and essential service recognition, and offering exclusive professional development resources in areas of leadership, wellness, and networking.
- For Future Members: For newer generations of providers, the value proposition must be about career empowerment and future-proofing their profession. NAEMT can appeal to them by:
 - Highlighting advocacy for better pay, benefits and working conditions: This directly addresses a primary concern for new professionals.
 - Offering resources for professional advancement: This could include scholarships, grants for advanced training, and a clear guide on how to grow within the field. The message should be: "Membership isn't just a fee; it's an investment in your career and the future of your profession."

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

- One of the most pressing issues in EMS is funding stability and sustainability. Due to an inadequate reimbursement model that focuses on transport rather than outcomes-driven care, funding should be based on value-based systems of care in which actions that are known to improve patient care outcomes are rewarded financially.
- NAEMT can help address the issue of sustainable funding by leading the charge for a performance-based reimbursement model. This is a significant shift from the current fee-for-service model.
- Advocate for a Value-Based Model: NAEMT should champion legislation at the federal level that links reimbursement to measurable patient outcomes and quality indicators, rather than just transport. This would incentivize agencies to invest in their workforce—hiring the best, paying them well, and providing professional development—because a better-trained workforce leads to better patient outcomes. NAEMT can use its influence to help define these metrics, ensuring they are focused on things that truly matter for

public health, public safety, and healthcare. In many cases, this also means changing the system delivery model to utilize more cost-effective deployment of resources that ensures high-quality skill retention and experience development.

- **Educate Stakeholders:** NAEMT can launch a campaign to educate lawmakers, insurers, and the public on the real costs of a high-quality EMS system. This would involve showing that cutting corners on provider salaries and benefits has a direct negative impact on patient care and public health. NAEMT's advocacy should highlight that big, expensive ambulances and equipment are not enough; it's the highly skilled, well-rested, and well-paid provider inside that vehicle who ultimately saves a life. Along those lines, agencies need to be incentivized to allocate funding to the right priorities, ensuring the EMS workforce is primed for the most effective and efficient care for our communities.
- **Establish Clear Standards for Professional Development and Retention:** By working with other national organizations, NAEMT can help set standards for what constitutes high-quality EMS education and professional development. This would provide a framework for agencies to follow and demonstrate to payers that investing in their providers yields tangible results. This would also empower providers by giving them a clear career path and a sense of professional value.