WEST virginia legislature

2024 regular session

Enrolled

Committee Substitute

for

Senate Bill 445

By Senators Deeds, Grady, Rucker, Smith, Stover, Stuart, Woelfel, Roberts, and Oliverio

[Passed March 8, 2024; in effect from passage]

AN ACT to amend and reenact §16-4C-8 and §16-4C-9 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, all relating to certification of emergency medical services personnel; establishing dates for mandatory rule-making; setting period of validity of certification for emergency medical services personnel at two years; and requiring Office of Emergency Medical Services to publish certain disciplinary actions taken against certified emergency medical services personnel on its website.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 4C. Emergency Medical Services Act.

§16-4C-8. Standards for emergency medical services personnel.

(a) Every ambulance operated by an emergency medical services agency shall carry at least two personnel. At least one person shall be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation or first aid and the person in the patient compartment shall be certified as an emergency medical technician-basic, at a minimum, except that in the case of a specialized multi-patient medical transport, only one staff person is required and that person shall be certified, at a minimum, at the level of an emergency medical technician-basic. The requirements of this subsection will remain in effect until revised by the legislative rule to be promulgated pursuant to §16-4C-8(b) of this code.

(b) On or before May 28, 2024, the commissioner shall submit a proposed legislative rule to the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council for review, and on or before June 30, 2024, shall file the proposed legislative rule with the Office of the Secretary of State, in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code, to establish certification standards for emergency medical vehicle operators and to revise the requirements for emergency medical services personnel.

(c) As of the effective date of the legislative rule to be promulgated pursuant to §16-4C-8(b), emergency medical services personnel who operate ambulances shall meet the requirements set forth in the legislative rule.

(d) Any person desiring emergency medical services personnel certification shall apply to the commissioner using forms and procedures prescribed by the commissioner. Upon receipt of the application, the commissioner shall determine whether the applicant meets the certification requirements and may examine the applicant if necessary to make that determination.

(e) The applicant shall submit to a national criminal background check, the requirement of which is declared to be not against public policy.

(1) The applicant shall meet all requirements necessary to accomplish the national criminal background check, including submitting fingerprints, and authorizing the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services, the West Virginia State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to use all records submitted and produced for the purpose of screening the applicant for certification.

(2) The results of the national criminal background check may not be released to, or by, a private entity.

(3) The applicant shall submit a fee of $75 for initial certification and a fee of $25 for recertification. The fees set forth in this subsection remain in effect until modified by legislative rule.

(f) An application for an original, renewal, or temporary emergency medical services personnel certificate or emergency medical services agency license, shall be acted upon by the commissioner and the certificate or license delivered or mailed, or a copy of any order of the commissioner denying any such application delivered or mailed, to the applicant within 15 days after the date upon which the complete application, including test scores and background checks, if applicable, was received by the commissioner.

(g) Certification as an Emergency Medical Dispatcher, Emergency Medical Vehicle Operator, Emergency Medical Responder, Emergency Medical Technician, Advanced Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Mobile Critical Care Paramedic, or Mobile Critical Care Nurse is valid for a period of two years with expiration dates determined by the commissioner.

 (h) Any person may report to the commissioner, or the Director of the Office of Emergency Medical Services, information he or she may have that appears to show that a person certified by the commissioner may have violated the provisions of this article or legislative rules promulgated pursuant to this article. A person who is certified by the commissioner, who knows of or observes another person certified by the commissioner violating the provisions of this article or legislative rules promulgated pursuant to this article, has a duty to report the violation to the commissioner or director. Any person who reports or provides information in good faith is immune from civil liability.

 (i) The commissioner may issue a temporary emergency medical services personnel certificate to an applicant, with or without examination of the applicant, when he or she finds that issuance to be in the public interest. Unless suspended or revoked, a temporary certificate shall be valid initially for a period not exceeding 120 days and may not be renewed unless the commissioner finds the renewal to be in the public interest.

 (j) For purposes of certification or recertification of emergency medical services personnel, the commissioner shall recognize and give full credit for all continuing education credits that have been approved or recognized by any state or nationally recognized accrediting body.

 (k) Notwithstanding any other provision of code or rule, the commissioner recognizes that military personnel, National Guardsmen, members of the United States Coast Guard, and members of the Reserve Components of the armed services have advanced skills and training necessary to meet the requirements of this section to be certified as an emergency medical technician-paramedic upon application. Any person may seek automatic certification as an emergency medical technician-paramedic in this state if he or she has:

(1) Been honorably discharged from any branch of the United States military;

(2) Received paramedic or similar life-saving medical training in positions including, but not limited to, United States Army Combat Medic, United States Air Force Pararescue, United States Air Force Combat Rescue Officer, United States Navy Hospital Corpsman – Advanced Technical Field, United States Coast Guard Health Services Technician, National Guard Health Care Specialist, the Reserve Components of any of the preceding positions, or can otherwise demonstrate that his or her occupation in the military received substantially similar training to be certified as required by the commissioner; and

(3) Received an honorable discharge within two years of the application date.

 (l) Notwithstanding any other provision of code or rule, the commissioner recognizes that military personnel, National Guardsmen, members of the United States Coast Guard, and members of the Reserve Components of the armed services have advanced skills and training necessary to meet the requirements of this section to be certified as an emergency medical technician-basic upon application. Any person may seek automatic certification as an emergency medical technician-basic in this state if he or she has:

(1) Been honorably discharged from any branch in the United States military;

(2) Received emergency medical technician training or similar life-saving medical training in positions including, but not limited to, United States Army Infantryman, United States Air Force Security Forces, United States Navy Hospital Corpsman, United States Coast Guard Aviation Survival Technician, United States Marines Infantryman, National Guard Infantryman, and Reserve Components of any of the preceding positions, or can otherwise demonstrate that his or her occupation in the military received substantially similar training to be certified as required by the commissioner; and

(3) Received an honorable discharge within two years of the application date.

(m) Upon reviewing an application for certification pursuant to subsections (k) and subsection (l) of this section, the commissioner shall issue an appropriate certificate to the individual applying for certification as an emergency medical technician-paramedic or emergency medical technician-basic without further examination or education. If an individual certified pursuant to this section permits his or her certification to expire, the commissioner may require examination as a condition of recertification.

§16-4C-9. Complaints; investigations; due process procedure; grounds for disciplinary action; public notice of action.

(a) The commissioner may at any time, upon his or her own motion, and shall, upon the written complaint of any person, cause an investigation to be conducted to determine whether grounds exist for disciplinary action under this article or legislative rules promulgated pursuant to this article.

(b) An investigator or other person who, under the direction of the commissioner or the director, gathers or reports information in good faith to the commissioner or the director, is immune from civil liability.

(c) After reviewing any information obtained through an investigation, the commissioner or director shall determine if probable cause exists that the licensee or certificate holder has violated any provision of this article or rules promulgated pursuant to this article.

(d) Upon a finding that probable cause exists that the licensee or certificate holder has violated any provision of this article or rules promulgated pursuant to this article, the commissioner or director shall provide a copy of the complaint and notice of hearing to the licensee or certificate holder. Upon a finding of probable cause that the conduct or continued service or practice of any individual certificate holder may create a danger to public health or safety, the commissioner may temporarily suspend the certification prior to a hearing or notice: *Provided,* That the commissioner may rely on information received from a physician who serves as a medical director in finding that probable cause exists to temporarily suspend the certification: *Provided, however,* That the commissioner shall simultaneously institute proceedings for a hearing in accordance with §16-4C-10 of this code.

(e) The commissioner or the director may enter into a consent decree or hold a hearing for the suspension or revocation of the license or certification or the imposition of sanctions against the licensee or certificate holder.

(f) The commissioner or the director may issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum to obtain testimony and documents to aid in the investigation of allegations against any person or agency regulated by this article.

(g) The commissioner or the director may sign a consent decree or other legal document related to the complaint.

(h) The commissioner shall suspend or revoke any certificate, temporary certificate, or license when he or she finds the holder has:

(1) Obtained a certificate, temporary certificate, or license by means of fraud or deceit; or

(2) Been grossly incompetent or grossly negligent as defined by the commissioner in accordance with rules or by prevailing standards of emergency medical services care; or

(3) Failed or refused to comply with the provisions of this article or any legislative rule promulgated by the commissioner or any order or final decision of the commissioner; or

(4) Engaged in any act during the course of duty which has endangered or is likely to endanger the health, welfare, or safety of the public.

(i) The commissioner or the director may, after notice and opportunity for hearing, deny or refuse to renew, suspend, or revoke the license or certification of, impose probationary conditions upon, or take disciplinary action against, any licensee or certificate holder for any violation of this article or any rule promulgated pursuant to this article, once a violation has been proven by a preponderance of the evidence.

(j) Disciplinary action may include:

(1) Reprimand;

(2) Probation;

(3) Administrative penalties and fines;

(4) Mandatory attendance at continuing education seminars or other training;

(5) Practicing under supervision or other restriction;

(6) Requiring the licensee or holder of a certificate to report to the commissioner or director for periodic interviews for a specified period of time;

(7) Other disciplinary action considered by the commissioner or director to be necessary to protect the public, including advising other parties whose legitimate interests may be at risk; or

(8) Other sanctions as set forth by legislative rule promulgated pursuant to this article.

(k) The commissioner shall suspend or revoke any certificate, temporary certificate, or license if he or she finds the existence of any grounds which would justify the denial of an application for the certificate, temporary certificate, or license if application were then being made for it.

(l) The Office of Emergency Medical Services shall, after notice and opportunity for hearing, make available to the public electronically via the board's website, information regarding any suspension or revocation of the certification of EMS personnel for any violation of this article or any rule promulgated pursuant to this article. The information published shall be limited to the individual’s name, certification number, whether the certification was revoked or suspended, and the date of action. This section does not require the Office of Emergency Medical Services to publish any information otherwise protected under this code.