



PARAMEDIC ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND FOUNDATION KNOWLEDGE

August 2001

During the development of the National Occupational Competency Profiles for Paramedic Practitioners, the Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC) produced some related documents to assist in defining the paramedic profession:

- *Essential Skills Profile* (June 8 2000)
- *Links Between Essential Skills and Occupational Competencies* (August 2001)
- *Foundation Knowledge Profile* (August 2001)

These documents will be primarily of use to paramedic educators, but will also assist others seeking to better understand the background aptitudes, skills and knowledge required by paramedics. They are available on the PAC Website at www.paramedic.ca

Essential Skills

The Essential Skills are enabling skills that provide individuals with part of the foundation necessary to learn paramedic-specific knowledge and skills, and to function in the workplace. Essential Skills include the following:

- Reading Text
- Use of Documents
- Writing
- Numeracy
- Oral Communication
- Thinking Skills (problem solving, decision making, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory and finding information)
- Working with Others
- Computer Use

In general, paramedic training programs do not include training in the Essential Skills. It is common practice, however, for programs to require incoming students to have demonstrated some degree of mastery of Essential Skills through either general educational prerequisites (such as grade 12 graduation, completion of English 12, etc) or through informal assessment (such as an admission interview process).

Certain Essential Skills areas, particularly Thinking Skills, are commonly not addressed in a formal manner through prerequisite requirements or informal assessment. Nor are they typically included as training program content. It is assumed instead that students either have developed these skills already through their life experiences, or that they will do so informally as they complete their paramedic training. Students unable to do so may fail to successfully complete their training program, or may have difficulty gaining or retaining employment.

Although incorporation of the Essential Skills is not a requirement, PAC encourages training programs to address the need for these skills in a comprehensive and formal manner, either through prerequisite requirements or through coursework within the program.

Foundation Knowledge

Foundation Knowledge is enabling knowledge that provides part of the foundation necessary to learn paramedic-specific knowledge and skills.

The Foundation Knowledge Profile defines knowledge in two areas:

- Life sciences (biochemistry, human biology, anatomy and physiology)
- Physical sciences (chemistry, physics)

Paramedic training programs vary in their approach to the Foundation Knowledge areas. Some programs require incoming students to have completed specific educational prerequisites (such as chemistry 12, a human anatomy and physiology course, etc). Other programs provide this material as formal coursework within paramedic training.

Although the incorporation of Foundation Knowledge is not a requirement, PAC encourages programs to address this need in a comprehensive and formal manner, either through prerequisite requirements or through coursework within the program.

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