



2022 Questions to NAEMT Board Candidates

Please include your response below each question. Please limit each answer to 500 words or less. Thanks.

Candidate: Timothy Dienst

Questions for 2022 Election Candidates

1. Define what you believe are the key characteristics of good leadership and describe the leadership qualities that you will bring to the position for which you are running.

Among other things, EMS leaders are compelled to:

- Build and support teams and programs
- Purchase vehicles and equipment
- Recruit and retain staff
- Develop collaborative relationships with other people and entities
- Provide training and education opportunities
- Establish quality management programs
- Implement strategic plans
- Pay for programs we initiate, items we consume, and the staff we engage, and
- Efficiently and effectively care for the sick and injured people who need our services.

Accomplishing all the aforementioned items, EMS leaders must recognize that we can't complete all those tasks without the support, encouragement, and critique of our superiors, peers, staff, community partners, and others. Therefore, every EMS leader must possess key leadership traits and skills listed below to lead our organizations effectively and efficiently now and in the future. As a current EMS leader, I see the value of, and incorporate whenever possible, the following leadership traits in everything I do.

Good leaders focus on the big-picture, aiming at where the organization is going and how we will get there. Leaders are adaptive and optimistic we move the organization toward a better future. We are armed with clearly defined missions, visions, values, and goals. Leaders listen to staff, community partners, and industry colleagues to obtain vital information toward supporting our mission and accomplishing goals. We recognize the value and welcome differing points of view when establishing objectives, creating policies and procedures, and implementing strategic plans. We create supportive organizational cultures rooted in diversity and inclusion, mutual respect, trust, transparency, and bidirectional communication. Leaders develop others, leading by example, delegating, educating, coaching, and mentoring to foster creativity and innovative

solutions to common problems. We promote and reward excellence in everything we do while, at the same time, being humble and not fearing conflict, mistakes, or failure. Leaders take responsibility for their errors, grow from them, and support each other when they fail.

If elected to the Board, I will utilize my past and present learned leadership skills and experiences to continue collaboratively and cooperatively building upon the past and current successes and achievements of the NAEMT. I will bring a differing perspective of an urban agency because of my agency's proximity to a metropolitan area but the nature and practice of a rural area. I will work with others to expand membership and improve member benefits, educational programs, advocacy efforts, and communication platforms. I will also continue to leverage the influence of the NAEMT in partnership with other allied associations to address and obtain meaningful and long-term sustainable solutions to the following goals:

- Implementing meaningful funding solutions to enhance EMS agency financial sustainability
- Exploring and growing educational opportunities for EMS providers to raise their scope of practice, compensation, opportunities, and benefits
- Expanding educational opportunities and options for practical leadership development
- Searching for solutions to EMS provider shortages
- Seeking resolutions to supply chain issues
- Promoting and expanding NAEMT programs and member benefits
- Establishing communications with Region IV members
- Rising member awareness of the importance of advocacy efforts at local, state, and national levels.

2. What do you believe are the top issues facing the EMS profession right now, and what role should NAEMT play in addressing these issues?

The top issues facing the EMS profession right now are numerous and complex. As I see them, the most pressing issues we face that the NAEMT must continue to be involved in addressing include, but are not limited to:

- Exploring the root causes of the workforce shortages to propose realistic and practical solutions to enhance the recruitment and retention efforts of EMS workers and volunteers
- Seeking solutions to supply chain issues that are causing medication, equipment, and vehicle shortages and delivery delays
- Building upon established efforts and programs to enhance EMS provider and leadership resilience. Implementing and deploying innovative solutions and resources that support the health and wellbeing of our overburdened workforce
- Creating additional leadership educational opportunities and resources to boost effective and efficient organizational leadership, especially for smaller rural agency leaders who lack the human resources to backfill when they are gone, funds, and time to attend in-person training opportunities
- Continuing the efforts to find and implement meaningful long-term funding solutions for EMS agencies to fund recruitment and retention efforts, workforce resilience efforts, expand and enhance quality management programs, improve and expand workforce training and education opportunities, and fund the rising costs associated with providing EMS and ambulance services.
- Continuing to support and expand the quality of multifaceted educational programs and opportunities for EMS providers that enhances their promotability, elevates their scope of

practice, raises compensation and benefits, and prepares them to engage in innovative healthcare-related opportunities in alternative care programs.

Because there are no easy fixes to any problems, the NAEMT must continue to grow and strengthen its relationships and collaborative efforts with allied organizations and associations to find and implement meaningful solutions to the issues we face. The combined efforts must include better defining the problems, understanding the needs of specific allied organizations, bridging the gaps where disagreements and conflicts arise, finding consensus on shared issues, and agreeing on proposed solutions to the problems. Once we collaboratively decide on a forward-thinking strategy, we move forward together as an EMS industry with resolve and a unified voice.

3. With additional stress on an already overburdened workforce, what steps can NAEMT take to support the health, wellbeing and resilience of our EMS practitioners?

I would propose that we've always had a recruitment and retention issue caused by a lack of health, well-being, and resilience resources. The COVID pandemic only made matters worse. Unfortunately, the EMS industry historically has, unintentionally or not, contributed to overburdening our workforce because supporting the health, well-being, and resilience of our EMS practitioners was not a priority. Unpredictable and prolonged work schedules, low pay, poor benefits, expectations for running as many calls as possible during their shift, completing paperwork, adding additional duties beyond patient care, and constant exposure to traumatic events and stressful situations without support all contribute to the ongoing problem. Some agencies have implemented employee assistance programs in larger metropolitan areas, but many smaller entities, especially in rural areas have few resources.

As leaders, we have inadvertently overburdened our crew because we didn't realize all the negative impacts and stresses we placed on them. We also didn't have the training and expertise to recognize the work-related symptoms of a suffering worker. Even if we did recognize the psychological signs and symptoms, we lacked the resources to address the problems and support our staff. When issues arose, and staff became "problematic," our response was often telling them to "...suck it up or go find another job!"

Fortunately, supporting the health, well-being, and resilience of EMS practitioners is now at the forefront, and NAEMT has already taken the lead in providing members with provider resiliency support. Through the NAEMT website, members can access the 'NAEMT Guide for Building an Effective Wellness and Resilience Program' and webpages full of additional resources related to EMS mental health, treatment and prevention programs, awareness education and training, safety, policy, protocols, and more. These resources are already available and ready to use! The problem is, do members know those resources are there for them to use?

Therefore, the most critical steps that the NAEMT can take is to continue to diligently connect with members to educate them on the resources available through the Association. This can be accomplished through multiple email blasts to members, reminding them of their benefits, resources, and how to access them. NAEMT can also establish and advance focus sessions specific to provider resiliency in every publication and as part of every event. The NAEMT can also continue to encourage agencies to share resiliency resources that they have created to address this issue. Finally, just like NAEMT provides sample legislation by state on its advocacy page, the Association can create state-specific informational lists for providers to access. For example, Path 4 EMS is a provider resiliency and mental health assistance program

in Colorado that is available, free of charge, to all EMS providers throughout the state could be added to that list.

4. How would you explain the value of NAEMT membership to both prospective members and existing members?

When expressing the value of NAEMT membership to prospective and existing members, I must begin by recognizing the effort, time, and energy already given to NAEMT by past and present directors, staff, and members. They are the face of the organization and have charted the path of NAEMT! They are the people who stepped up to the plate, exposed themselves, and assumed risks by working through past hardships, implementing strategic plans, creating innovative programs, and leading our organization to where we are today! As a result, the NAEMT is more robust than ever, and their commitments must be recognized and commended.

From my perspective, the best aspect of the NAEMT is that it represents the plurality of EMS, devoid of any particular interest. NAEMT represents the best of EMS because its membership is diverse, including individuals who are EMRs, EMTs, paramedics, nurses, physicians, and educators. They represent agencies that are career and volunteer, public and private, large and small, and urban and rural. Moreover, because of its plurality, NAEMT is best suited to build bridges that link competing interests where they exist to foster compromise, develop consensus, and advance initiatives that improve EMS, including funding, education, and resiliency. Most notably, organizations and interests that are cooperating, collaborating, and working together in partnership achieve real results, get work done, and accomplish goals that strengthen EMS as a whole.

NAEMT is genuinely a member-driven organization where member participation is encouraged. Therefore, if they choose, members are encouraged to apply to participate in all NAEMT programs, committees, and taskforces. In addition, member participation affords NAEMT leadership and committees insight into what's going on at the local level, ultimately driving national initiatives. Because of member participation, NAEMT programs, classes and conferences, advocacy efforts, publications, and other resources are second to none! Finally, I encourage members to surf the NAEMT website to discover the plethora of resources and benefits available to them through NAEMT. Nearly all the resources on the individual pages came from member ideas, input, and contributions.