



# News Release

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## Two NMCC allied health programs undergoing external reviews

*Aroostook County* - Two allied health programs at Northern Maine Community College are undergoing reviews by external organizations this fall designed to demonstrate the delivery of high quality education to both students and prospective employers of graduates. The Medical Assisting program, one of the newer associate degree offerings added to the curriculum in 2007, is seeking accreditation, while the Emergency Medical Services program is in the process of renewing its state approval.

The Medical Assisting program, which will undergo its very first review by an accrediting body, will have a team of site surveyors visit the campus on November 4 and 5 for an extensive evaluation of the two-year degree offering. The visitors will review program documentation, course outlines, evaluation instruments and program outcomes, meeting with various constituencies from across campus and in the community, including faculty, administrators, staff, students, recent graduates and regional medical professionals.

“The end goal of all of this is so our graduates can take the Certified Medical Assisting (CMA) credentialing exam, which is the gold standard for medical assisting,” said Susan Dugal, nursing faculty member and medical assisting program coordinator. “This program was developed to meet the needs of employers within our service area. Although they do not currently require credentialing for medical assistants they employ, it is the future of medical assisting in this area.”

Dugal stated that 2010 graduates of the program that applied for jobs in the Bangor area this year were required to take a credentialing exam within one year of employment – and preferably the CMA. According to the program coordinator, four students in this year’s graduating class will be looking for jobs in the Houlton area and south. “This accreditation will serve both the students, the College, and employers quite well.”

The application for this process was submitted by NMCC earlier this year in April, followed by the submission of the College self-study in July. The upcoming site survey is the next step in the process to confirm the quality of the Medical Assisting program.

Eight to ten weeks following the site visit, College officials will be sent a report of the survey team's findings. The report will be reviewed by NMCC for factual accuracy and then will be presented to the Medical Assisting Education Review Board (MAERB) when they meet in February of the coming year.

The board conducts a blind review of the documentation and makes recommendations to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs about granting accreditation to the program under review. NMCC anticipates learning about its accreditation status in the coming spring.

Students who have graduated during the 36 months preceding CAAHEP accreditation will be eligible to take the AAMA certification examination. NMCC and other institutions applying for accreditation through CAAHEP are only able to apply after the first group of students have completed degree requirements and graduated from the program.

Site evaluators from Maine Emergency Medical Services will be on the NMCC campus in the days immediately preceding the Medical Assisting review, and even overlap for a day, as they conduct their visit of the NMCC EMS Training Center. The EMS team will visit Presque Isle November 2, 3 and 4.

The Presque Isle college, which has offered EMS programming first through its Continuing Education Division and at the associate degree and certificate credential level for more than a decade, is an authorized Maine EMS Training Center. Authorization for such a designation is valid for a period of five years. NMCC is seeking renewal of that status for another five-year period.

“This is important for the program as it verifies that NMCC's training center is meeting or exceeding the minimum required educational standards. It assures the EMS program is continuously involved in program improvement and evaluation,” said Daryl Boucher, program coordinator for NMCC's EMS offerings and nursing faculty member.

The EMS site visit also follows a comprehensive self-study prepared by Boucher and other program instructors. After the visit, Maine EMS receives a written report and a recommendation from the site visitors. Based on this information, Maine EMS may grant continuing approval.

NMCC officials expect to hear about their status for continuing approval in January of 2011.

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