

# Quick Guides to the Health Professions

## Paramedics

### *What is a paramedic?*

Paramedics are skilled health care professionals who, often with limited patient information, conduct comprehensive assessments, determine a differential diagnosis, establish a comprehensive treatment plan, and ensure safe and efficient transport. In a medical emergency, paramedics are often the patient's initial point of contact with the healthcare system. Paramedicine is a dynamic field that incorporates a broad knowledge of patient care, human anatomy, pharmacology, crisis intervention, and communications.

### *What do paramedics do?*

Paramedics are responsible for assessing the scene, delivering patient care, and transporting patients to an appropriate medical facility. They often work within confined or challenging spaces and must work effectively with all members of the emergency response and health care team. In non-emergency situations, paramedics also treat and support patients in the community and at home, rather than transporting them to a hospital.

### *Where do paramedics work?*

Paramedics may work in an ambulance, a house, office, nursing home, helicopter, emergency department, industrial site, or on the side of the road. Paramedics are also embedded across the full spectrum of the healthcare system, working in education, patient safety and health service quality, policy and governance, program development and project management, primary and continuing care, and health leadership.

### *Education and preparation*

There are three levels of practitioners in Alberta: Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Primary Care Paramedic (PCP), and Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP). EMRs have a basic level of training, PCPs have more comprehensive training including an eight month certificate program, and ACPs require two years of advanced training and practicums.

### *Licensure*

In Alberta, all EMRs, PCPs and ACPs must hold an active practice permit from the Alberta College of Paramedics.

### *Professional organizations*

The Alberta College of Paramedics (ACP)  
<https://www.collegeofparamedics.org>

The Alberta Paramedic Association (APA)  
<http://www.albertaparamedics.ca>

The Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC)  
<http://paramedic.ca/site/home?page=home>

### *Contributors to this guide*

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Alberta Health Services Emergency Medical Services  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/ems/ems.aspx>

Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice, Western University Canada  
<https://www.uwo.ca/fhs/education/ipe/index.html>



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