AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF AMBULANCE PROFESSIONALS

Certified Ambulance Professional Program

Version Date December 2007
Version No. 6.4

GUIDELINES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION
Ambulance clinical practice guidelines, certifications and regular recertification’s are quality assurance measures which can assist ambulance authorities to maintain a high level of confidence in the fulfilment of the authorities duty of care to the community and clients. Following discussions with the Australian Council of Ambulance Authorities (CAA), the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals (ACAP) has developed a Certified Ambulance Professional (CAP) program for ambulance professionals who formally maintain their knowledge and competencies through an ambulance authorities certification process or continuing professional education. This program is also suitable for ambulance professionals who operate outside the auspices of traditional ambulance authorities.

2.0 AIMS
The primary aims of the Certified Ambulance Professional program are:

2.1 To provide a quality assurance contribution to ambulance patient care and ambulance employers in Australia by encouraging ambulance professionals to manage, and take responsibility for their own individual knowledge and competency.

2.2 To facilitate national professional recognition for ambulance professionals and enhance recognition of qualifications between State and Territory ambulance authorities and other pre-hospital care providers.

3.0 COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ACAP is committed to:

3.1.1 Providing additional value to certifications and recertification’s of ambulance knowledge and current competencies developed under the authority of State and Territory ambulance authorities and other pre-hospital providers. Individuals can attain national professional recognition as a Certified Ambulance Professional

3.1.2 Developing ambulance professionals and helping to ensure Continuing Paramedic Education (CPE) in ambulance patient care and services.
3.1.3 Rewarding an individual for effort in fulfilling a self directed program with professional recognition at national level.

The Applicant is committed to:

3.2.1 Abiding by the terms, conditions and standards for professional recognition established by ACAP.

3.2.2 Abiding by the Code of Conduct as established by ACAP.

3.2.3 Complying with the certification and recertification timelines as described in this guideline.

3.2.4 Maintaining currency of ambulance knowledge, competency and practice through the application of this program.

3.2.5 Maintaining certification for practice.

4.0 FUNCTIONS

The Certified Ambulance Professional program focuses on:

4.1 Providing professional recognition of individuals at various levels of qualification throughout Australia in a voluntary regulation program as Certified Ambulance Professionals.

4.2 Delivering enhanced care and service to the community through the on-going state of the art knowledge and competency of ambulance professionals.

4.3 Maintaining a public register of ambulance professionals, currently certified for ambulance and clinical practice, at various accredited levels of patient contact, eg CAP-Paramedic, CAP-Communications, CAP-Volunteer (or equivalent title).

4.4 Provide a mechanism for the certification process for ambulance professionals operating outside the auspices of State or Territory ambulance authorities.
4.5 Encouraging and facilitating continuing education and enhancement of ambulance clinical and service practice standards.

4.6 Monitoring and advising any inappropriate pre-hospital patient care and service activities.

4.7 Referring recommendations, commendations and complaints concerning ambulance practice, patient care competence and behaviour, which may come to ACAP, to the appropriate ambulance authority or provider.

4.8 Investigate complaints regarding “Certified Ambulance Professionals” and make decisions regarding their continued certification status.

5.0 CRITERIA

“Certified Ambulance Professionals” are recognised through the process of meeting the following set requirements and submitting evidence of attainment to ACAP:

5.1 Qualifications
Have successfully completed or are enrolled in accredited education courses to enhance ambulance qualification at one or more levels of ambulance patient care. Are accredited for ambulance practice (where applicable) by an authorised ambulance authority or other provider.

5.2 Current Competency (Certified for Clinical or Other Ambulance Practice)
Individuals who have undertaken an ongoing competency maintenance program at the individual’s established level of qualification, and have been certified within the last two years by a State or Territory ambulance authority or other provider as being competent for ambulance patient care or ambulance practice, may submit evidence of their competency status and continuing paramedic education to ACAP for recognition. This submission should be forwarded on the CAP Currency Claim form (appendix 2).

5.3 Commitment to undertake on-going professional development.
Members who have submitted a written commitment to ACAP to undertake on-going professional development to enhance their ambulance skills, eg ambulance patient care, education and/or ambulance management skills may
enrol in the CAP program. CAP participants must undertake and provide a record of a prescribed number of points annually, as a quality assurance initiative. An “activities log” is provided by ACAP to facilitate record-keeping which should be kept up to date and be made available as required for audit. (appendix 3)

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The ultimate achievement will lead to a structured voluntary regulation system for ambulance professionals.

The objectives of the CAP program are as follows:

6.1 The CAP program will provide the community with the recognition of ambulance professionals who are taking responsibility for maintaining their own knowledge and competence in ambulance practice, thus improving public confidence.

6.2 Professional recognition will be awarded to individuals through the study and practical application of knowledge and skills in the ambulance environment to enhance and maintain:

6.2.1 a continuing understanding of the knowledge and skills required of an ambulance professional,

6.2.2 an appreciation of generic skills and knowledge that enhance opportunities to expand ambulance practice or service in specific areas,

6.2.3 an on-going development of analytical and research skills that contribute to a better understanding of ambulance patient care and/or service delivery, and

6.2.4 Recognition and adherence to the responsibilities, ethics and obligations of an ambulance professional.
6.3 This program is intended to ensure that the community is served by ambulance professionals who achieve and maintain a certificate for ambulance practice and an acceptable and continuous level of competence.

6.4 This program is intended to contribute to continuing quality improvement in ambulance patient care and service delivery throughout Australia.

6.5 The program will ensure equity of access to professional recognition by taking advantage of remote area and flexible learning activities, which can be integrated with practical application of skills, patient contact, or research activity.

7.0 AUDIT
The program will be subject to periodic audit by the National Practice and Standards Committee of ACAP. A random audit of up to 10% of the program participants will be undertaken annually by the CPE secretariat to validate points claims.

7.1 Points Allocation

Continuing Paramedic Education (CPE) points are allocated on a basis of 1 point per hour of educational endeavour. ACAP events will have points allocated prior to commencement. Events conducted by other providers may apply for endorsement by ACAP and will be allocated points according to the quality of development challenge they offer. Other activities may be self-assessed by CAP participants using the 1 point = 1 hour model. A table demonstrating examples of point's allocation is provided in appendix 4. No one activity or event may account for more than half (50%) of the annual points claim. The CPE secretariat will have the final say on determining the allocation of points.
8.0 CERTIFIED AMBULANCE PROFESSIONAL PROCESS

Figure 1. Illustrates the process of establishing and maintaining CAP Status

- Decision is made to commit to the CAP process
  - All members of ACAP are enrolled in the CAP program
  - Commence a log of professional activities online or using format from appendix 3.
  - OPTION 1: Collect and submit 50 points to claim CAP currency online or using form from appendix 2
  - OPTION 2: Submit a claim for CAP currency based on authority recognised system of professional development online or using form from appendix 2
  - Receive CAP Registration Remains current for one year
  - Recommence a log of professional activities online or using format from appendix 3. Collect 50 points annually
9.0 **RECERTIFICATION**

9.1 **Certification as an Ambulance Professional**

The recertification requirement is an important verification of competency. This certification enhances the integrity of the Certified Ambulance Professional. It is also an important quality assurance measure in ambulance and pre-hospital practice.

9.2 **Points System**

Initial certification and annual recertification is achieved by the accumulation of 50 continuing paramedic education points. Individuals have responsibility for the maintenance and development of their own competency. Recertification points are accumulated for demonstrated satisfactory completion of a vast array of continuing paramedic education activities.

An accumulation of points from the maintenance of clinical and other knowledge and competencies is essential for all patient care professionals participating in the CAP program.

9.3 **On-going Recognition**

Continued CAP recognition for ambulance practice and patient care levels is subject to annual submission to ACAP of records accumulation of points in accordance with CAP guidelines. The CPE secretariat will audit up to 10% of participants annually to validate points claims.

10.0 **PROPOSED MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

It is recommended that ambulance authorities and other pre-hospital providers enter into a formal documented “Memorandum of Agreement” with ACAP to provide for the goodwill, mutual intent, commitment and obligations each would offer to the establishment and on-going operation of the CAP program. Further information regarding this can be obtained from the ACAP National Secretary.
11.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

11.1 Assessment Arrangements

Individuals not attached to or employed by a statutory ambulance authority may apply to ACAP for assessment or recertification. A fee may be applied to these services.

11.2 Joining ACAP

Individuals should complete the application package available on the ACAP website: www.acap.org.au.

11.3 Timing

Accumulation of CPE Points is an annual process and for the purpose of this program the year will run from July to June (eg: financial year). Submission of claims for recertification will be open from June to August. Failure to submit the required CPE declaration within this period will result in the applicants CAP status being removed. It is the participant’s professional responsibility to monitor due dates and submit recertifications by the due date.

11.4 Fees

This is a free program for ACAP members.

12.0 ON-GOING DEVELOPMENT

12.1 On-going development and learning are the key components of professional recognition and are appropriate strategies for ambulance individuals to keep abreast of change.

12.2 Continuing Paramedic Education (CPE) includes educational and development activities conducted by ACAP, as well as activities undertaken elsewhere that meet the set criteria.
12.3 Requirements are achieved by:

(a) Participating in workshops, seminars and conferences

(b) Participating in discussion groups relevant to professional development activities including clinic practice reviews/audits

(c) Review of literature and articles relevant to the area of practice including ACAP scientific publications

(d) Participating in relevant learning and development activities offered by an employer and achieving competency in the subject area where applicable

(e) Undertaking and progressing in, and/or completing, applicable tertiary courses

(f) Participating in development activities offered by professional bodies and presented by reputable experts in the relevant areas

(g) Researching, writing, preparing and delivering papers that contribute to the quality of ambulance patient care, service delivery, education or ambulance management

(h) Serving on and actively participating in technical or research groups supervised by employers, ACAP or other reputable and professional organisations including trade unions or government departments

(i) Serving as a “mentor/coach” for student ambulance professionals or other learners under a formal request from a State or Territory ambulance authority or other provider.
13.0 CONCLUSION
It is time to make a commitment to this program for the benefit of patients and clients and for the satisfaction of having national recognition of competency for ambulance professionals.

Having a goal or incentive to maintain or enhance professional standing is important in any career environment. It helps keep us abreast of change and enhances our satisfaction through the motivation stimulated by seeking better understanding and learning more about our chosen profession.

Development and recognition at a national level opens up new and exciting opportunities for ambulance professionals.

ACAP commends the CAP program to all parties involved in the ambulance profession for the benefit of patients, ambulance personnel and the Australian community.

Feedback on the Certified Ambulance Professional program is invited.

Please direct comments to Malcolm McDonald at cpe@acap.org.au.