

EMS Program Drug Screening – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why is drug screening required for EMS students?

Drug screening is required to ensure **patient safety, clinical site compliance, and eligibility for field and hospital placements**. EMS students are placed in direct patient care environments and are held to standards similar to healthcare employees. Clinical and field affiliates mandate drug screening as a condition of participation.

2. Is drug screening required for *all* EMS students?

Yes. **All EMT and Paramedic students** are required to complete drug screening **before being scheduled** for any clinical or field internship experience. There are **no exceptions**.

3. What type of drug test is required?

Students are required to complete a **standard healthcare drug screen**, typically a **10-panel urine drug screen**, which may include (but is not limited to):

- Marijuana (THC)
- Cocaine
- Opiates
- Amphetamines
- Benzodiazepines
- Barbiturates
- Methadone
- Phencyclidine (PCP)
- MDMA (Ecstasy)
- Oxycodone

Clinical affiliates may require **additional substances** or **expanded panels** at their discretion.

4. Does California marijuana legalization change this requirement?

No.

Regardless of state marijuana laws, **clinical facilities enforce drug-free workplace policies**. A positive THC result is interpreted as a **failed drug screen** in clinical, regulatory, and healthcare settings.

Legal use does not equal clinical eligibility.

5. What does a “positive” drug test mean?

A positive drug test means:

- A prohibited substance or metabolite was detected **above the established cutoff level**
- It does **not** mean you were impaired at the time of testing
- It **does** mean the substance was present in your system

In healthcare settings, **presence alone is sufficient** for disqualification.

6. What happens if I fail or refuse a drug screen?

If a student:

- Fails a drug screen
- Refuses to test
- Misses the testing deadline
- Attempts to adulterate or tamper with the sample

The student will:

- Be **ineligible for clinical and field placements**
- Be considered **unsuccessful in the course**
- Be required to **drop the course or receive a D/F grade**, depending on timing

There are **no remediation options** for failed drug screens.

7. Can I retest if I fail?

Yes. One time at the student's expense.

- Student who chooses to retest **MUST** be given a package code (provided by the clinical coordinator) and schedule the retest immediately.
- Costs for the retest are paid for by the student, not the school
- Only one retest will be permitted.

8. Are prescription medications allowed?

Yes, **valid prescriptions** may be considered by the Medical Review Officer (MRO). However:

- You must provide documentation **when contacted**
- Certain prescribed medications may still disqualify you based on clinical site policy
- Disclosure to the program **does not override** facility rules

9. Can detox products, masking agents, or excessive hydration help?

No.

Use of detox products, adulterants, or dilution attempts may:

- Still result in a positive test
 - Be reported as **tampering**
 - Result in **automatic failure** of the drug screen
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10. Can the program make exceptions or advocate on my behalf?

No.

The EMS program:

- Does **not control** clinical affiliate policies
- Cannot override drug-free workplace requirements
- Cannot advocate for exceptions or second chances

Clinical eligibility is **entirely determined by the facility**.

11. Can clinical sites require additional or random drug testing?

Yes.

Clinical and field affiliates may require:

- Random drug testing
- For-cause testing
- Repeat testing during the program

Failure to comply results in **immediate removal from the site**.

12. What if I disagree with a drug test result?

Disputes must be handled **directly with the testing vendor or MRO**. The program does not adjudicate test results.

13. When should I complete my drug screen?

Students should complete drug screening **as early as possible**. Waiting until the deadline increases the risk of:

- Delays
 - Ineligibility for scheduling
 - Course failure
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14. Bottom Line

Drug screening is:

- Mandatory
- Time-sensitive
- Non-negotiable
- Required for clinical participation

Failure to meet drug screening requirements means **you cannot complete the program.**



Professional Reality Check

EMS is a **safety-sensitive profession**. Drug-free compliance is not a classroom rule—it is a career requirement.