

BC3's future life-savers can save money with financial aid applicable to associate degree EMT course

June 15, 2020



Morgan Evinger, a native of Marysville, a borough 10 miles north of Harrisburg, will be among the first students to be able to apply federal financial aid to an emergency medical technician certification preparation course that debuts this fall within Butler County Community College's emergency services-EMS option associate degree program. Evinger, 20, who moved to Slippery Rock two years ago, is shown Tuesday, June 9, 2020, on BC3's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) Federal financial aid will be applicable to a Butler County Community College emergency medical technician certification preparation course that debuts this fall within a two-year career program, an offering that could allow future life-savers to save money before helping to reduce a statewide shortage of first responders.

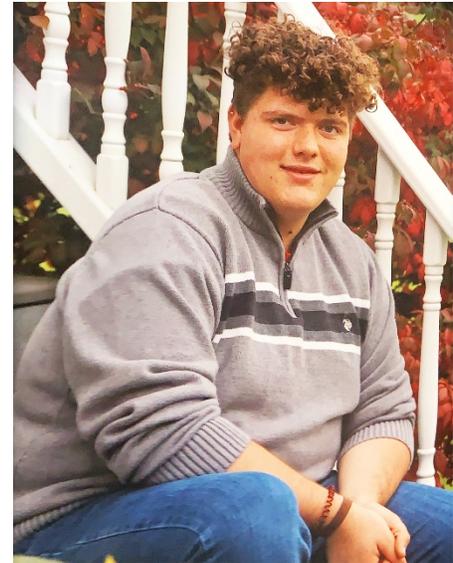
BC3's emergency services-EMS option associate degree program requires EMT certification as it prepares graduates for entry-level positions that include frontline personnel in pre-hospital and clinical healthcare environments.

Students enrolled in the associate degree program previously had pursued EMT certification preparation through a noncredit course offered by an approved educational provider of their choice. Most noncredit courses, however, are ineligible for federal financial aid, said Julianne Louttit, BC3's director of financial aid.

While students who previously passed a noncredit certification preparation class offered by educational providers such as BC3's Workforce Development division would receive six credits toward the 60-credit associate degree, federal financial aid was not applicable to defray the \$700 cost of the course.

"Now their preparation for that certification is eligible for financial aid, so it's not coming out of their pocket," said Stephen Joseph, dean of BC3's humanities and social science division, which includes the emergency services-EMS option associate degree program. "They have to get these studies in before they can even sit for the exam."

BC3 students enrolled in the career program must complete prerequisites in medical terminology, medical law and ethics, and basic human structure – courses for which federal financial aid is also applicable – before taking the EMT certification preparation course.



Steven Schaeffer, of Kams City, will be among the first students to be able to apply federal financial aid to an emergency medical technician certification preparation course that debuts this fall within Butler County Community College's emergency services-EMS option associate degree program. Schaeffer, 19, is a graduate of West Shamokin Junior-Senior High School.

Six-credit course to include lectures, labs, patient contacts

Those who pass the EMT certification preparation course will receive six credits. Those who pass the exam and become certified as an EMT by the state Department of Health and by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians will receive an additional credit hour.

The certification preparation class includes three lecture hours and three lab hours weekly, and a total of at least 16 patient contact hours, Joseph said. Among topics in the course are airway, respiration and artificial ventilation; cardiac arrest management, respiratory emergencies, bleeding and shock, highway safety and vehicle rescue and chest and abdominal trauma – among the basic trainings in all aspects of emergency medical care that an EMT is permitted to provide in Pennsylvania.

Seventy-six percent of the 975,000 times EMS providers were summoned in Pennsylvania in the first six months of 2018 were in response to 911 calls, according to the most recent information available from the state Department of Health.

The number of job openings for EMTs and paramedics will grow by 7 percent through 2028, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

EMS West and EMMCO West are councils that oversee EMS activities in Armstrong, Butler, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer and 16 other western Pennsylvania counties for the state Department of Health.

While the councils have a combined 14,000 EMS providers, "There is a shortage of all levels of EMS providers, not just throughout the commonwealth, but nationwide," said Kiley Cribbs, coordinator of BC3's EMS and police training programs. "A lot of the smaller services are in competition to find people."

"There are dire needs for EMS providers in Pennsylvania and across the country," said Richard Kaufman, regional education coordinator of EMS West.

"There's a shortage in the entire state," added Tom Buttyan, EMS education and outreach specialist for EMMCO West.

Financial aid availability "wonderful," BC3 student says

BC3 students Morgan Evinger, a native of Marysville, a borough 10 miles north of Harrisburg, and Steven Schaeffer, of Karns City, anticipate helping others, and helping to fill that shortage.

They will also be among the first students in the career program to benefit from the EMT certification preparation course for which financial aid is applicable.

"I've been thinking about this a lot," said Evinger, 20, who moved to Slippery Rock two years ago. "Paying for college is always an issue with everybody. This is now being given financial aid and we can put that money toward something else that we can use. It's wonderful, especially given that I came from the background that I did. I came from a blue-collar family. We are not rich, but we are doing our best."

Added Schaeffer: "It was going to be \$700 out of pocket. With financial aid helping to pay for it, that will help some people out tremendously because sometimes money is just tight."

Evinger expects to initially work as an EMT, responding to calls "where anything can be happening. Overdoses. Car accidents. Attempted suicides. Gunshot wounds. Heart attacks. Falling off a ladder."

"Or if someone calls with pain or say they can't walk and they need to get to the hospital," said Schaeffer, 19, a West Shamokin Junior-Senior High School graduate.

Evinger and Schaeffer expect to be among the 70 percent of BC3 graduates who are debt-free when they receive their associate degrees in emergency services-EMS option next May.

The median pay in 2019 for EMTs and paramedics was \$35,400, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, which also predicts nearly 19,000 job openings in the next eight years.

"With the certification and the degree, it will just open up a lot more doors for me," Evinger said. "I do know that my job outlook is high."