

TO: Kentucky EMS Service Directors, Medical Directors, and Personnel  
FROM: Walt Lubbers, MD, KBEMS State Medical Advisor  
RE: 2023 State Protocol Update  
April 21, 2023

The 2023 update to the Kentucky State Protocols was approved at the KBEMS Board of Directors meeting on April 13, 2023. The final protocol set will be posted on the KBEMS website.

**Bottom Line First:** Any service using or wishing to use the State Protocols in full or in part must submit a medical protocol request and letter from the service and medical director per usual process by November 1, 2023, or submit their own autonomous protocols; there is no real option to stay on the previous version of the State Protocols. Services using AEMTs must submit the completed AEMT Medication Election form (page 43) by that date.

#### **Detailed Version and FAQs:**

Please note the protocol set approved on 4/13/23 is now the official version of the State Protocol; if your service has adopted the state protocols (even if it has added autonomous protocols or made modifications), these are now the state protocols. Please consider the old document to have disappeared and the new document is in the official place as the State Protocol.

In the past, updates to the State Protocol were automatically accepted by any service using them. As there were some fairly substantial changes in this update, and as it represents the first large scale update in many years, it is important to ensure that each medical director using them as their protocol and order set has reviewed them and wishes to use them. As such, each service using the State Protocol or wishing to use them in full or in part will need to submit a medical protocol request in KEMSIS with a letter from the service medical director and service director stating their intention to use these protocols.

**The deadline to submit this request is November 1, 2023.** After this date, any service that reports to be using the state protocols but has not submitted either a letter to adopt the new version fully, adopt with changes, or to adopt autonomous protocols will be considered to be using an unapproved protocol. At this time, all services using the State Protocols will need to be actively using the updated version as well (if they have not already gone live with it).

For services utilizing AEMTs, the service medical director has a fair amount of discrimination in term of what medications AEMTs may administer in that service. For documentation of that decision, any service using AEMTs will need to submit the completed AEMT Medication Election Form (page 43) signed by the medical director to specify the scope of practice for medications for AEMTs. This should be attached with the medical protocol request. This completed form should also be included with any hard or electronic copies distributed to the service. Note that if that form is not completed, it will be considered outside the AEMT scope of practice to administer any of the medications on that list for AEMTs working at that service.

A training video will be available on the KBEMS website for general education. The State Medical Advisor also has offered to provide in-person education on them for any service adopting them (pending availability).

FAQ's

**Q: We are already using the old version of the state protocols; do we have to submit another letter?**

A: Yes, these are fairly substantial changes and we want to make sure every medical director not only has reviewed them but also agrees to use them.

**Q: Can we continue to use the old version of the state protocols if we're already approved to use them?**

A: You must either submit autonomous protocols or request to use the new version. The previous version of the State Protocols no longer exists.

If you feel you absolutely must stay on the old version, you would need to submit the old protocol set as an autonomous protocol, and it would never update with the new protocols. Note that this is not recommended, and without substantial mitigating circumstances the State Medical Advisor would likely not recommend the Board approve such a request. You would be much better off to use the updated version and request any specific alterations the service medical director desires.

**Q: Do we have to use these protocols?**

A: Any service medical director may at any time submit autonomous protocols. These protocols are provided as a model and service from KBEMS, but your individual service medical director is who chooses to adopt them as his/her orders. Being on a widely used consistent statewide protocol has many benefits, including promoting interoperability between services, making it easier on providers going between services, and providing a level of protection from litigation for the medical director. It also removes the burden of updates for the service and service medical director.

**Q: What if our service medical director doesn't like something in a protocol or doesn't want us to use a specific protocol?**

A: There is an option to request to use the State Protocols with additions or changes on the application form. In order to do that, you must clearly specify what additions or changes you are going to make on your application, and you must submit a written copy of that protocol with that change made (ie if you make a change on page 37, you will need to submit your amended page 37 with your application). If your medical director wishes to not adopt certain protocols, please specify which protocol/ page you are not adopting.

*Please note that extensive work went into this update so that things are up to date and so you wouldn't need to make changes (not adopting certain protocols might be understandable under some circumstances). If you wish to make a change to a protocol, please include an explanation as well as any references/ literature/ nationally recognized guidelines that support your reasoning, as it will expedite discussion and throughput.*

The other thing to note is that a medical director may choose to credential only some of the providers working in the service to perform some procedures, treatments, or protocols. While it is assumed that protocols are adopted for the whole service generally, a medical director may limit who is credentialed to perform pretty much anything; documentation of that selective credentialing is the responsibility of the service.

**Q: What if we already use the State Protocols, but we submitted previous changes or autonomous protocols with it?**

A: If you have previously approved autonomous protocols, those remain unchanged (they are your service's responsibility to update and submit when they update). If you have made modifications to the State Protocol, you should review the new version and decide if you want to keep those modifications (in many cases you won't need the modification to the old protocol). Generally, previously approved changes would be approved again unless they contradict something in the new version of the State Protocol. If you desire to keep your old modifications, please specify what they are and that they were previously approved.

**Q: What about the protocols that were previously marked as "restricted"?**

A: Several years ago, most of the "restricted" protocols were made unrestricted and any service could use them (provided the service medical director credentials staff to use them). The only protocol that is "restricted" currently is the Drug-Assisted Intubation/ RSI/ RSA protocol; when a service adopts the new version of the State Protocol, they do not automatically have permission to use that specific protocol (unlike the others in the document). A service must specifically request to use that restricted protocol on the application and it will require some additional documentation be submitted.

**Q: How do we submit suggestions for future updates of the State Protocols?**

A: Any suggestions may be sent to [KBEMS.protocol.comments@gmail.com](mailto:KBEMS.protocol.comments@gmail.com)

**Q: When should we expect the next update?**

A: The goal is to maintain a yearly update with roll out in January/ February of any updates.

**Q: We'd like to have the State Medical Advisor come out for an in-person education session. How can we arrange that?**

A: Email [walter.lubbers@ky.gov](mailto:walter.lubbers@ky.gov)