



Acts Affecting First Responders

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts) significantly affecting first responders enacted during the 2019 regular session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Criminal Justice and Public Safety, are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/actsaffecting.asp>.

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on OLR's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/olrsums.asp>.

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or General Assembly's website: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/>.

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Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Personnel

EMS and Mobile Integrated Health

This session, the legislature made various changes to laws affecting emergency medical services and related issues. Among other things, a new law:

1. allows a volunteer, hospital-based, or municipal ambulance service to apply to the Department of Public Health (DPH) to add a branch location to their primary service area using a short-form application instead of requiring an automatic hearing;
2. starting January 1, 2020, and within available appropriations, allows DPH to authorize an EMS organization to establish a mobile integrated health program under the organization's existing license or certification, and prohibits EMS organizations from providing a mobile integrated health program without DPH approval;
3. generally makes patients who receive nonemergency services from a mobile integrated health care program liable for reasonable and necessary service costs;
4. allows a licensed or certified EMS organization or provider to transport patients by ambulance to alternate destinations (i.e., medically appropriate facilities other than emergency departments) in consultation with the medical director of a sponsor hospital; and
5. adds paramedics to the list of health care providers authorized to provide telehealth services ([PA 19-118](#), §§ 19, 46-57, 59-61, & 64-69, effective July 1, 2019).

EMS Personnel Certifications

Two new laws make various changes to the credentialing of certain EMS personnel. Among other things, they require, starting January 1, 2020:

1. applicants for a paramedic license or an emergency medical responder (EMR), emergency medical technician (EMT), or advanced EMT certificate to complete specific mental health first aid training; and
2. EMR, EMT, or advanced EMT certification applicants to obtain certification from a national organization in lieu of prior state requirements, and EMS instructors to obtain and renew their state certification in this manner.

Additionally, EMRs, EMTs, advanced EMTs, and EMS instructors must renew their certifications every two years, rather than every three years ([PA 19-118](#), § 58, effective July 1, 2019, and [PA 19-191](#), § 10, effective October 1, 2019).

Firefighters

Qualified Assistants for Fighting Forest Fires

Under a new law, if the state forest fire warden (i.e., the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection commissioner) determines that additional assistants are required to extinguish a forest fire in the state, she may add “temporary emergency workers” who meet specified training and qualification requirements to the state forest fire control personnel. The act extends state workers’ compensation benefits to these workers and requires the Department of Administrative Services to assist the state forest fire warden in developing appropriate classifications for them ([PA 19-37](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Law Enforcement

Document Envelope for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Under a new law, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) commissioner must, in consultation with the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association and at least one autism spectrum disorder (ASD) advocacy organization, design blue envelopes that (1) hold a driver’s license, registration, and insurance card and (2) provide guidance on communication between police officers and people with ASD. Beginning January 1, 2020, the DMV commissioner must provide these envelopes, upon request, to a person with ASD or such person’s parent or guardian if the person is a minor ([PA 19-161](#), § 39, effective upon passage).

Motor Vehicle Inspectors as Peace Officers

A new law expands a statutory definition of peace officer to include motor vehicle inspectors in the DMV who have received Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) certification. Under prior law, motor vehicle inspectors had many, but not all, of the powers and protections afforded to these peace officers. Under the act, POST-certified motor vehicle inspectors are specifically allowed to, among other things, be considered peace officers for purposes of the state’s Blue Alert system, which can be used to apprehend anyone suspected of killing or seriously injuring a peace officer or locate any officer who is missing ([PA 19-108](#), effective October 1, 2019).

Police Accountability

The legislature passed a law regarding (1) law enforcement’s use of force, (2) body-worn and dashboard camera recording disclosures, and (3) police pursuits.

Among other things, the act requires law enforcement units to submit an annual use of force report to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). OPM must (1) complete a preliminary status report

when a peace officer uses physical force that results in death, which must be submitted to the legislature, and (2) make certain use of force reports available on its website.

The act also (1) makes certain body-worn or dashboard camera recordings disclosable to the public within 96 hours after the incident, (2) narrows the instances during which use of deadly force is justified, and (3) generally prohibits a pursuing police officer from discharging a firearm into or at a fleeing motor vehicle.

Lastly, the act (1) establishes a task force to study police transparency and accountability and (2) requires POST to study and review police officers using firearms during a pursuit ([PA 19-90](#), effective October 1, 2019, except the task force and POST study provisions are effective upon passage).

Police Detention Study

Under a new law, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in collaboration with DPH and any other relevant entity the agencies designate, must study and report on the (1) protocol for police detention of someone suspected of overdosing on an opioid drug and (2) implications of involuntarily transporting such a person to an emergency department and referring him or her to a recovery coach ([PA 19-191](#), § 13, effective upon passage).

Police Mental Health Treatment and Surrendered Work Weapons

A new law generally prohibits a law enforcement unit from disciplining police officers solely because they seek or receive mental health care services or surrender their work weapons or ammunition. It also requires a unit to request that officers seek a mental health examination before returning their surrendered work weapons or ammunition.

By law, it is generally a crime for a person to possess a firearm, ammunition, or electronic defense weapon within six months of voluntary admission to a psychiatric hospital for psychiatric treatment. The act creates an exception to this prohibition for police officers who surrendered their work weapons or ammunition and allows them to have these items returned during this time period without penalty ([PA 19-17](#), §§ 4-6, effective October 1, 2019).

Reimbursement for the Purchase of Body-Worn Electronic Recording Equipment

A new law allows municipalities that purchased body-worn recording equipment during FYs 17 and 18 and paid for the equipment by August 31, 2018, to qualify for reimbursement from OPM of up to

100% of the equipment's cost. As under existing law, the reimbursement must be made within available resources ([PA 19-11](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Resident State Trooper Fringe Funding

By law, until FY 20, a town participating in the resident state trooper program pays, among other things, 100% of the overtime costs and the portion of fringe benefits directly associated with such costs. For FY 20 and each fiscal year thereafter, a new law requires the comptroller to pay 50% of the portion of the state employees' retirement system fringe recovery rate attributable to the unfunded liability of the system from the resources appropriated for State Comptroller-State Employees' Retirement System Unfunded Liability ([PA 19-117](#), § 81, effective July 1, 2019).

School Security

Under a new law, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection must (1) update state school security and safety plan standards, (2) simplify certain school security reporting requirements and school security infrastructure grant applications, and (3) develop criteria to identify qualified school security consultants and limit the existing registry to such individuals only. It also adds related duties for the State Department of Education and the School Safety Infrastructure Council ([PA 19-52](#), most sections are effective upon passage).

Transfer of Law Enforcement Agency Records between Agencies

A new law exempts from liability a law enforcement agency that discloses certain criminal investigation records to another law enforcement agency that is authorized to receive them, if the receiving agency further discloses the records. The act applies to records that law enforcement agencies compile in connection with detecting or investigating a crime, and that the Freedom of Information Act exempts from mandatory disclosure when disclosure is not in the public interest because it would reveal certain information ([PA 19-30](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Miscellaneous Affecting Multiple First Responders

Additional Compensation for Certain Retired Public Safety Employees

Under a new law, municipalities are authorized to compensate certain disabled public safety employees who were severely injured in the line of duty, retired from service as a result of their injuries, and are under age 65. A municipality may provide such compensation to any qualified employee who was a uniformed member of its paid fire department or regular member of its paid police department. The compensation must equal the difference between the amount the qualified

employee receives in workers' compensation and other benefits and his or her regular pay at the time of retirement ([PA 19-111](#), effective October 1, 2019).

CPR and First Aid Training and Certification

A new law adds to the list of organizations that may train or certify people in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or first aid for various purposes. It does so by allowing organizations to provide this training or certification if they use guidelines published by the American Heart Association and either the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation (for CPR) or American Red Cross (for first aid). The act applies to, for example, first aid training required for firefighters, police officers, EMS personnel, and certain others to qualify for immunity under certain provisions of the Good Samaritan statute ([PA 19-105](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Insurance Coverage of Certain Dependent Children

By law, the comptroller arranges for group hospitalization, medical, and surgical plans for the surviving spouses and dependent children of state or local police officers, full-time paid municipal firefighters, or constables who performed criminal law enforcement duties and died from injuries received in the course of their employment. Under a new law, a dependent child's coverage under such a plan terminates the earlier of the end of the calendar year, rather than the end of the policy year, in which the child turns age 26 or obtains insurance through his or her own employment ([PA 19-125](#), § 9, effective upon passage).

Interpreters for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

A new law broadens the circumstances under which people providing interpreting services for the deaf or hard of hearing must register with the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), but also creates exceptions to this requirement. Interpreters need not register with DORS to provide interpreting services during an emergency situation, if obtaining a registered interpreter could cause a delay that may lead to injury or loss to the individual requiring services ([PA 19-170](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Limitation on Use of Blue and Red Steady Lights

Under a new law, the use of a steady blue or red illuminated light, visible from the front of a vehicle, is limited to a state or local police vehicle operated by a police officer or DMV inspector. By law, unchanged by the act, vehicles operated by certain individuals under specified circumstances may use flashing blue or red lights (e.g., volunteer firefighters, EMS organization members, or police officers responding to an emergency) ([PA 19-161](#), § 10, effective October 1, 2019).

Mental Health Care and Wellness for Police Officers and Firefighters

This session, the legislature passed a new law requiring POST and the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control to develop and promulgate a model critical incident and peer support policy to support the mental health care and wellness of police officers and firefighters. The act also requires resilience and self-care technique training for new police officers and firefighters ([PA 19-17](#), §§ 7-10, effective July 1, 2019).

Property Tax Abatement Increase for Certain First Responders

A new law increases the maximum property tax abatement municipalities may, by ordinance, provide to certain active and retired volunteer emergency personnel from \$1,000 to \$1,500 for FYs 20 and 21, and from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for FY 22 and thereafter. Volunteer personnel that may be affected include, for example, firefighters, paramedics, and certain retired police officers ([PA 19-36](#), effective July 1, 2019).

Protection of Confidential Communications between a First Responder and a Peer Support Team Member

The legislature passed a law making communications between a first responder and a peer support team member confidential with certain exceptions. The confidentiality applies only to communications and records made in the course of a first responder's participation in a peer support program established by his or her employer. The act generally prohibits a peer support team member from disclosing any confidential communications or records unless the first responder waives the privilege ([PA 19-188](#), effective October 1, 2019).

Training for Responding to People with Special Needs

A new law expands first responders' access to training on handling incidents involving children and adults with ASD, nonverbal learning disorder (NLD), and cognitive impairment. It also requires the UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities to develop and publish on its website a communication aid for certain first responders to use to communicate with individuals with ASD, NLD, or cognitive impairment during emergencies when verbal communication may be hindered or impossible ([PA 19-147](#), most provisions effective July 1, 2019).

Workers' Compensation for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Under a new law, police officers and firefighters are allowed to receive certain workers' compensation benefits for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) caused by certain "qualifying events," such as seeing, while in the line of duty, a deceased minor, someone's death, or a traumatic physical injury that results in the loss of a vital body part.

More specifically, the new law (1) establishes the eligibility requirements for these officers and firefighters to receive PTSD benefits; (2) limits the benefits' (a) duration to 52 weeks and (b) availability to within four years after the qualifying event; (3) caps an officer's or firefighter's weekly PTSD benefits, when combined with the amount of other benefits he or she receives (e.g., from Social Security), at his or her average weekly wage; and (4) establishes a process for employers to contest PTSD claims ([PA 19-17](#), §§ 1-3 & 11-12, most provisions effective July 1, 2019).