

Meet Bob Szeli, Individual NEMSQA Member, and Clinical Systems Supervisor at Mobile Life Support Services!

Bob Szeli, EMT-P, BS, is a 12-year paramedic with a passion for improving patient care by protecting and supporting EMS providers. Bob works at Mobile Life Support Services, a private ambulance company serving the Hudson Valley in New York. For the last two years, he has been running the quality improvement department, managing the company's clinical systems and providing data analytics for its safety programs. He is also in graduate school for a dual master's in data analytics and MBA.

Bob cares deeply for EMS providers, saying, "The best care for our patients comes from having happy, healthy, and safe providers."



How did you end up working in EMS?

Around 2005, I worked as a writer for an independent magazine. They wanted me to write an article about new technologies being adopted by emergency services. For the piece, my wife put me in touch with her childhood best friend's mother, who was an EMS instructor and the magazine had me take the class to become an EMT. Then they went out of business, but I finished the class on my own and just fell in love with everything about EMS. I just loved reading about the science of it, the technology we could bring, the patient care we could get into. And then I just continued my education from there.

How did you find out about NEMSQA?

I'm an NAEMT Safety Instructor, and I'm constantly talking to my crews about science-based medicine and practices. In 2019 I was at a conference in Hershey, PA, and attended a talk about myths and old practices of EMS. One of the topics was lights and sirens and why we need to stop doing this. That's how I found NEMSQA, just doing some basic Google searches and cruising through their website.

What is one of your current areas of focus as Clinical Systems Supervisor?

Our owner really believes that a safe provider leads to safer patients. So we're focusing on keeping our crews from becoming overworked, and helping them manage mental health issues, stress, and exhaustion. In order to keep our patients safe, our providers need to be safe.

How do you help support providers at Mobile Life?

We have an unofficial, QI-guided clinical mentorship. We actually just had a really successful example. It was a new paramedic, who for six months just had no critical calls. She reached out to us and expressed that she was getting depressed because she felt like she wasn't doing anything. So we got her in touch with an employee who a few years ago had had the same feeling. Once a week the two of them were just having a 15-minute phone call. Just a little bit of counseling, catching up, talking about new science. Last week I had lunch with both of them and it has worked great for them. They're both in good places. That paramedic has had a bunch of critical calls now and she kind of blames me for it. But it worked out really well.

What is the approach to quality improvement at Mobile Life?

Mobile Life has always been very strong in the belief, and I really take this to heart, that QI itself should always be an open, educational process. Even when there's a clinical mistake, it's not punitive, it's education. We don't focus on the mistake, we remember the lesson. You don't have to be a rockstar cowboy paramagician every single day. But you should want to be there tomorrow. The only person you have to be a better paramedic or a better EMT than tomorrow is you today.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I go hiking, I ride my bicycle, I kayak. It's been a little cold for the bicycle because it's February in New York. But it's also just for my mental health. Getting out and looking at something green just feels better.