

RAC Operation Guidelines

Trauma Facility Designation

This guidelines as of 06/04/2008 is under review/revision

I. Trauma Facility

A trauma facility is an integral player in a well-developed trauma system. This section will examine the roles of the trauma facility in system development, the various levels of trauma designation and briefly cover legislation pertaining to designation as a trauma facility.

II. The Trauma Facility in System Development

- A. The goal of trauma care is to deliver injured patients in a timely manner to the closest, most appropriate facility. Regionalization of trauma care involves the participation of hospitals and EMS with the resources necessary to provide optimal care for injured patients and the identification of the specific capabilities of each facility. Every facility has a role in providing a tiered response to meet the needs of injured patients.
- B. An essential part of the trauma care system plan is the designation of tertiary care facilities. Effective trauma systems are the results of a successful partnership between the designated trauma facilities and other members of the Regional Advisory Council. In fact, the relationship may be described as symbiotic.
- C. The trauma system plan should integrate all hospitals into an inclusive network in order to provide a full spectrum of care for all injured patients. True, there is a very specific and formal designation process for trauma facilities, and that has a very important role in systems development. There is a wealth of resources, other than hospitals, providing for trauma care that is not and probably never will be formally designated at a specific level. For example, the aid station in a remote National Forest service Park may become very important in delivering initial assessment and life saving care to a trauma victim. It's vitally important to know the resources and capabilities of every healthcare facility in the surrounding area. In an inclusive system, every resource is included in planning.
- D. Every hospital plays an important role in system development despite their level of designation. The function of a tertiary trauma center is obvious, but the undesignated facility in that same trauma service also has a role to play. The undesignated facility may provide initial assessment, stabilization and prepare the injured patient for transfer to the most appropriate facility, as well as provide definitive care to those patients with minor injuries.

II. Levels of Trauma Facility Designation

In the Texas Trauma System there are four recognized levels of trauma facility designation. They are; Comprehensive (Level I), Major (Level II), General (Level III) and Basic (Level IV).

A. Comprehensive (Level I)

The Comprehensive trauma facility is a tertiary care hospital that maintains a distinct leadership role in the trauma system development, optimal care delivery,

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evaluation, training and research. It is the regional resource trauma center in a system and has the capability to provide definitive care for every aspect of injury, prevention through rehabilitation. Not every TSA has a Level I facility. Designation as a comprehensive facility requires a tremendous commitment of resources.

B. Major (Level II)

Like the Comprehensive facility a Major Trauma Center is a hospital that can provide definitive care to victims of trauma. However, there are a few circumstances which may require the transfer of a patient to a more specialized hospital/ physician. Few TSAs across the state have a designated Level II Trauma Facility. Again, it is important that each facility be proactive in formalizing a relationship with a tertiary care center in order to expedite the transfer of critically injured patients.

C. General (Level III)

Like the Level II facility, a General Trauma Center may provide tertiary care to most patient, but need to transfer of those needing more specialized care. Designation as a Level III trauma centers requires an outstanding commitment as this center provides prompt assessment, resuscitation and emergent intervention for severely injured trauma patients. In many TSAs, the General (Level III) Facility serves as the tertiary care facility for the region.

D. Basic (Level IV)

Basic Trauma Centers provide the stabilization to critically injured patients despite having limited resources. These facilities provide the opportunity to develop entry points into the trauma system. A Level IV facility may not be able to provide surgical intervention, but can provide access to an on-call trauma physician. For this reason, the development of treatment protocols for initial stabilization and the existence of transfer agreements are essential.

E. The Undesignated Trauma Facility

There are acute care hospitals in every TSA who choose not to designate as a trauma facility. These facilities may still play a role in trauma care. In fact, many of these facilities may see a great deal of trauma in the area. Remember, in the inclusive system, they play a role. These facilities must understand the importance of transferring patients rapidly and effectively to an appropriate trauma center when necessary.

Proactive communication within the trauma system enhances the ability to accomplish this task and overall allows for better trauma care.

III. State Trauma Facility Designation

The Omnibus Rural Health Care Rescue Act of 1989 charged the Texas Department of Health through the Bureau of Emergency Management (BEM) with the responsibility of

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designating trauma facilities within the state. Chapter 773, section 773.115 of the Health and Safety Code outlines those responsibilities.

The law requires the Office of EMS & Trauma Systems Coordination (formally the BEM) to designate trauma facilities that are part of an emergency medical services and trauma care system. The law requires that trauma facilities be designated in accordance with the standard set forth by the American College of Surgeons for Level I and Level II. The State, through the input of stakeholders, developed criterion for Level III and Level IV facilities. Designation as a trauma facility in the State of Texas is good for a three year period.