
HOUSE BILL 1864

State of Washington

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2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Thomas and Griffey

1 AN ACT Relating to transport of patients by ambulance to
2 facilities other than emergency departments; amending RCW 18.73.280,
3 48.43.121, 74.09.330, 70.168.015, and 70.168.100; reenacting and
4 amending RCW 18.71.210; and adding a new section to chapter 41.05
5 RCW.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 **Sec. 1.** RCW 18.73.280 and 2015 c 157 s 4 are each amended to
8 read as follows:

9 An ambulance service may transport patients to a (~~nonmedical~~)
10 facility other than an emergency department, such as an urgent care
11 clinic a mental health facility, or (~~chemical dependency~~) a
12 substance use disorder program, as authorized in regional emergency
13 medical services and trauma care plans under RCW 70.168.100.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 41.05
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 A health plan offered to employees and their covered dependents
17 under this chapter issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2026,
18 shall provide coverage for ground ambulance transport to a facility
19 other than an emergency department, such as an urgent care clinic, a

1 mental health facility, or a substance use disorder program, in
2 accordance with RCW 18.73.280.

3 **Sec. 3.** RCW 48.43.121 and 2024 c 218 s 12 are each amended to
4 read as follows:

5 (1) (a) For health plans issued or renewed on or after January 1,
6 2025, a health carrier shall provide coverage for ground ambulance
7 transports to behavioral health emergency services providers for
8 enrollees who are experiencing an emergency medical condition as
9 defined in RCW 48.43.005. A health carrier may not require prior
10 authorization of ground ambulance services if a prudent layperson
11 acting reasonably would have believed that an emergency medical
12 condition existed.

13 (b) For a health plan issued or renewed on or after January 1,
14 2026, a health carrier shall provide coverage for ground ambulance
15 transport to a facility other than an emergency department, such as
16 an urgent care clinic, in accordance with RCW 18.73.280.

17 (2) Coverage of ground ambulance transports (~~(to behavioral~~
18 ~~health emergency services providers)) under subsection (1) of this~~
19 section may be subject to applicable in-network copayments,
20 coinsurance, and deductibles, as provided in chapter 48.49 RCW.

21 **Sec. 4.** RCW 74.09.330 and 2015 c 157 s 6 are each amended to
22 read as follows:

23 The authority shall develop a reimbursement methodology for
24 ambulance services when transporting a medical assistance enrollee to
25 a facility other than an emergency department, such as an urgent care
26 clinic, mental health facility, or ((chemical dependency)) substance
27 use disorder program, in accordance with RCW 18.73.280 and the
28 applicable alternative facility procedures adopted under RCW
29 70.168.100.

30 **Sec. 5.** RCW 70.168.015 and 2015 c 157 s 2 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 As used in this chapter, the following terms have the meanings
33 indicated unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

34 (1) "Cardiac" means acute coronary syndrome, an umbrella term
35 used to cover any group of clinical symptoms compatible with acute
36 myocardial ischemia, which is chest discomfort or other symptoms due
37 to insufficient blood supply to the heart muscle resulting from

1 coronary artery disease. "Cardiac" also includes out-of-hospital
2 cardiac arrest, which is the cessation of mechanical heart activity
3 as assessed by emergency medical services personnel, or other acute
4 heart conditions.

5 (2) "Communications system" means a radio and landline network
6 which provides rapid public access, coordinated central dispatching
7 of services, and coordination of personnel, equipment, and facilities
8 in an emergency medical services and trauma care system.

9 (3) "Department" means the department of health.

10 (4) "Designated trauma care service" means a level I, II, III,
11 IV, or V trauma care service or level I, II, or III pediatric trauma
12 care service or level I, I-pediatric, II, or III trauma-related
13 rehabilitative service.

14 (5) "Designation" means a formal determination by the department
15 that hospitals or health care facilities are capable of providing
16 designated trauma care services as authorized in RCW 70.168.070.

17 (6) "Emergency medical service" means medical treatment and care
18 that may be rendered at the scene of any medical emergency or while
19 transporting any patient in an ambulance to an appropriate medical
20 facility, including ambulance transportation between medical
21 facilities.

22 (7) "Emergency medical services and trauma care planning and
23 service regions" means geographic areas established by the department
24 under this chapter.

25 (8) "Emergency medical services and trauma care system plan"
26 means a statewide plan that identifies statewide emergency medical
27 services and trauma care objectives and priorities and identifies
28 equipment, facility, personnel, training, and other needs required to
29 create and maintain a statewide emergency medical services and trauma
30 care system. The plan also includes a plan of implementation that
31 identifies the state, regional, and local activities that will
32 create, operate, maintain, and enhance the system. The plan is
33 formulated by incorporating the regional emergency medical services
34 and trauma care plans required under this chapter. The plan shall be
35 updated every two years and shall be made available to the state
36 board of health in sufficient time to be considered in preparation of
37 the biennial state health report required in RCW 43.20.050.

38 (9) "Emergency medical services medical program director" means a
39 person who is an approved program director as defined by RCW
40 18.71.205(4).

1 (10) "Facility patient care protocols" means the written
2 procedures adopted by the medical staff that direct the care of the
3 patient. These procedures shall be based upon the assessment of the
4 patients' medical needs. The procedures shall follow minimum
5 statewide standards for trauma care services.

6 (11) "Hospital" means a facility licensed under chapter 70.41
7 RCW, or comparable health care facility operated by the federal
8 government or located and licensed in another state.

9 (12) "Level I-pediatric rehabilitative services" means
10 rehabilitative services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Facilities
11 providing level I-pediatric rehabilitative services provide the same
12 services as facilities authorized to provide level I rehabilitative
13 services except these services are exclusively for children under the
14 age of fifteen years.

15 (13) "Level I pediatric trauma care services" means pediatric
16 trauma care services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Hospitals
17 providing level I services shall provide definitive, comprehensive,
18 specialized care for pediatric trauma patients and shall also provide
19 ongoing research and health care professional education in pediatric
20 trauma care.

21 (14) "Level I rehabilitative services" means rehabilitative
22 services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Facilities providing level
23 I rehabilitative services provide rehabilitative treatment to
24 patients with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries,
25 complicated amputations, and other diagnoses resulting in functional
26 impairment, with moderate to severe impairment or complexity. These
27 facilities serve as referral facilities for facilities authorized to
28 provide level II and III rehabilitative services.

29 (15) "Level I trauma care services" means trauma care services as
30 established in RCW 70.168.060. Hospitals providing level I services
31 shall have specialized trauma care teams and provide ongoing research
32 and health care professional education in trauma care.

33 (16) "Level II pediatric trauma care services" means pediatric
34 trauma care services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Hospitals
35 providing level II services shall provide initial stabilization and
36 evaluation of pediatric trauma patients and provide comprehensive
37 general medicine and surgical care to pediatric patients who can be
38 maintained in a stable or improving condition without the specialized
39 care available in the level I hospital. Complex surgeries and

1 research and health care professional education in pediatric trauma
2 care activities are not required.

3 (17) "Level II rehabilitative services" means rehabilitative
4 services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Facilities providing level
5 II rehabilitative services treat individuals with musculoskeletal
6 trauma, peripheral nerve lesions, lower extremity amputations, and
7 other diagnoses resulting in functional impairment in more than one
8 functional area, with moderate to severe impairment or complexity.

9 (18) "Level II trauma care services" means trauma care services
10 as established in RCW 70.168.060. Hospitals providing level II
11 services shall be similar to those provided by level I hospitals,
12 although complex surgeries and research and health care professional
13 education activities are not required to be provided.

14 (19) "Level III pediatric trauma care services" means pediatric
15 trauma care services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Hospitals
16 providing level III services shall provide initial evaluation and
17 stabilization of patients. The range of pediatric trauma care
18 services provided in level III hospitals are not as comprehensive as
19 level I and II hospitals.

20 (20) "Level III rehabilitative services" means rehabilitative
21 services as established in RCW 70.168.060. Facilities providing level
22 III rehabilitative services provide treatment to individuals with
23 musculoskeletal injuries, peripheral nerve injuries, uncomplicated
24 lower extremity amputations, and other diagnoses resulting in
25 functional impairment in more than one functional area but with
26 minimal to moderate impairment or complexity.

27 (21) "Level III trauma care services" means trauma care services
28 as established in RCW 70.168.060. The range of trauma care services
29 provided by level III hospitals are not as comprehensive as level I
30 and II hospitals.

31 (22) "Level IV trauma care services" means trauma care services
32 as established in RCW 70.168.060.

33 (23) "Level V trauma care services" means trauma care services as
34 established in RCW 70.168.060. Facilities providing level V services
35 shall provide stabilization and transfer of all patients with
36 potentially life-threatening injuries.

37 (24) "Patient care procedures" means written operating guidelines
38 adopted by the regional emergency medical services and trauma care
39 council, in consultation with local emergency medical services and
40 trauma care councils, emergency communication centers, and the

1 emergency medical services medical program director, in accordance
2 with minimum statewide standards. The patient care procedures shall
3 identify the level of medical care personnel to be dispatched to an
4 emergency scene, procedures for triage of patients, the level of
5 trauma care facility, mental health facility, or (~~chemical~~
6 ~~dependency~~) substance use disorder program, or other nonemergency
7 department facility, such as an urgent care clinic, to first receive
8 the patient, and the name and location of other trauma care
9 facilities, mental health facilities, or (~~chemical—dependency~~)
10 substance use disorder programs to receive the patient should an
11 interfacility transfer be necessary. Procedures on interfacility
12 transfer of patients shall be consistent with the transfer procedures
13 required in chapter 70.170 RCW.

14 (25) "Pediatric trauma patient" means trauma patients known or
15 estimated to be less than fifteen years of age.

16 (26) "Prehospital" means emergency medical care or transportation
17 rendered to patients prior to hospital admission or during
18 interfacility transfer by licensed ambulance or aid service under
19 chapter 18.73 RCW, by personnel certified to provide emergency
20 medical care under chapters 18.71 and 18.73 RCW, or by facilities
21 providing level V trauma care services as provided for in this
22 chapter.

23 (27) "Prehospital patient care protocols" means the written
24 procedures adopted by the emergency medical services medical program
25 director that direct the out-of-hospital emergency care of the
26 emergency patient which includes the trauma patient. These procedures
27 shall be based upon the assessment of the patients' medical needs and
28 the treatment to be provided for serious conditions. The procedures
29 shall meet or exceed statewide minimum standards for trauma and other
30 prehospital care services.

31 (28) "Rehabilitative services" means a formal program of
32 multidisciplinary, coordinated, and integrated services for
33 evaluation, treatment, education, and training to help individuals
34 with disabling impairments achieve and maintain optimal functional
35 independence in physical, psychosocial, social, vocational, and
36 avocational realms. Rehabilitation is indicated for the trauma
37 patient who has sustained neurologic or musculoskeletal injury and
38 who needs physical or cognitive intervention to return to home, work,
39 or society.

40 (29) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of health.

1 (30) "Trauma" means a major single or multisystem injury
2 requiring immediate medical or surgical intervention or treatment to
3 prevent death or permanent disability.

4 (31) "Trauma care system" means an organized approach to
5 providing care to trauma patients that provides personnel,
6 facilities, and equipment for effective and coordinated trauma care.
7 The trauma care system shall: Identify facilities with specific
8 capabilities to provide care, triage trauma victims at the scene, and
9 require that all trauma victims be sent to an appropriate trauma
10 facility. The trauma care system includes prevention, prehospital
11 care, hospital care, and rehabilitation.

12 (32) "Triage" means the sorting of patients in terms of
13 disposition, destination, or priority. Triage of prehospital trauma
14 victims requires identifying injury severity so that the appropriate
15 care level can be readily assessed according to patient care
16 guidelines.

17 (33) "Verification" means the identification of prehospital
18 providers who are capable of providing verified trauma care services
19 and shall be a part of the licensure process required in chapter
20 18.73 RCW.

21 (34) "Verified trauma care service" means prehospital service as
22 provided for in RCW 70.168.080, and identified in the regional
23 emergency medical services and trauma care plan as required by RCW
24 70.168.100.

25 **Sec. 6.** RCW 70.168.100 and 2015 c 157 s 3 are each amended to
26 read as follows:

27 Regional emergency medical services and trauma care councils are
28 established. The councils:

29 (1) By June 1990, shall begin the development of regional
30 emergency medical services and trauma care plans to:

31 (a) Assess and analyze regional emergency medical services and
32 trauma care needs;

33 (b) Identify personnel, agencies, facilities, equipment,
34 training, and education to meet regional and local needs;

35 (c) Identify specific activities necessary to meet statewide
36 standards and patient care outcomes and develop a plan of
37 implementation for regional compliance;

38 (d) Establish and review agreements with regional providers
39 necessary to meet state standards;

1 (e) Establish agreements with providers outside the region to
2 facilitate patient transfer;

3 (f) Include a regional budget;

4 (g) Establish the number and level of facilities to be designated
5 which are consistent with state standards and based upon availability
6 of resources and the distribution of trauma within the region;

7 (h) Identify the need for and recommend distribution and level of
8 care of prehospital services to assure adequate availability and
9 avoid inefficient duplication and lack of coordination of prehospital
10 services within the region;

11 (i) Identify procedures to allow for the appropriate transport of
12 patients to facilities other than emergency departments, such as
13 urgent care clinics, mental health facilities, or ~~((chemical~~
14 ~~dependency))~~ substance use disorder programs, as informed by RCW
15 18.73.280 and the alternative facility guidelines adopted under RCW
16 70.168.170; and

17 (j) Include other specific elements defined by the department;

18 (2) By June 1991, shall begin the submission of the regional
19 emergency medical services and trauma care plan to the department;

20 (3) Shall advise the department on matters relating to the
21 delivery of emergency medical services and trauma care within the
22 region;

23 (4) Shall provide data required by the department to assess the
24 effectiveness of the emergency medical services and trauma care
25 system;

26 (5) May apply for, receive, and accept gifts and other payments,
27 including property and service, from any governmental or other public
28 or private entity or person, and may make arrangements as to the use
29 of these receipts, including any activities related to the design,
30 maintenance, or enhancements of the emergency medical services and
31 trauma care system in the region. The councils shall report in the
32 regional budget the amount, source, and purpose of all gifts and
33 payments.

34 **Sec. 7.** RCW 18.71.210 and 2015 c 157 s 5 and 2015 c 93 s 4 are
35 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

36 (1) No act or omission of any physician's trained advanced
37 emergency medical technician and paramedic, as defined in RCW
38 18.71.200, or any emergency medical technician or first responder, as
39 defined in RCW 18.73.030, done or omitted in good faith while

1 rendering emergency medical service under the responsible supervision
2 and control of a licensed physician or an approved medical program
3 director or delegate(s) to a person who has suffered illness or
4 bodily injury shall impose any liability upon:

5 (a) The physician's trained advanced emergency medical technician
6 and paramedic, emergency medical technician, or first responder;

7 (b) The medical program director;

8 (c) The supervising physician(s);

9 (d) Any hospital, the officers, members of the staff, nurses, or
10 other employees of a hospital;

11 (e) Any training agency or training physician(s);

12 (f) Any licensed ambulance service; or

13 (g) Any federal, state, county, city, or other local governmental
14 unit or employees of such a governmental unit.

15 (2) This section shall apply to an act or omission committed or
16 omitted in the performance of the actual emergency medical procedures
17 and not in the commission or omission of an act which is not within
18 the field of medical expertise of the physician's trained advanced
19 emergency medical technician and paramedic, emergency medical
20 technician, or first responder, as the case may be.

21 (3) This section shall apply also to emergency medical
22 technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and
23 medical program directors participating in a community assistance
24 referral and education services program established under RCW
25 35.21.930.

26 ~~((3))~~ (4) This section shall apply also, as to the entities and
27 personnel described in subsection (1) of this section, to any act or
28 omission committed or omitted in good faith by such entities or
29 personnel in rendering services at the request of an approved medical
30 program director in the training of emergency medical service
31 personnel for certification or recertification pursuant to this
32 chapter.

33 ~~((4))~~ (5) This section shall apply also, as to the entities and
34 personnel described in subsection (1) of this section, to any act or
35 omission committed or omitted in good faith by such entities or
36 personnel involved in the transport of patients to facilities other
37 than emergency departments, such as urgent care clinics, mental
38 health facilities, or ~~((chemical dependency))~~ substance use disorder
39 programs, in accordance with applicable alternative facility
40 procedures adopted under RCW 70.168.100.

1 (~~(5)~~) (6) This section shall not apply to any act or omission
2 which constitutes either gross negligence or willful or wanton
3 misconduct.

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