



Frequently Asked Questions Wisconsin State Trauma Program – ATLS Requirements

The purpose of this document is to clarify the requirements of Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) certification for site review visits. For any reference to “footnotes,” please review the Level III and IV Hospital Assessment and Classification Criteria, which is also Appendix A from the Department of Health Services Administrative Rule 118.

1. I am a Level III hospital, what are the requirements for my surgeons, emergency room physicians, trauma medical director, and mid-level staff, as it relates to Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS)?

Trauma Level III - Footnote 5

In a Level III State of Wisconsin classified Trauma Care Facility (TCF):

- The Trauma Medical Director (TMD) (as defined by Footnote 7* in the Level III and IV Hospital Assessment and Classification Criteria) must be current in Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS) throughout their term serving as TMD.
- Emergency room physicians caring for the injured patient must have taken ATLS at least once if board certified in emergency medicine. Emergency room physicians who are not board certified in emergency medicine must remain current in ATLS.
- If a nurse practitioner (NP) or physician assistant (PA) is caring for a trauma patient with no medical doctor (MD) back-up, the NP/PA needs to be current in ATLS. If the NP/PA has MD back-up and the MD is present for the trauma activation, then the NP/PA does not have to be ATLS certified.

General Surgeons who participate in the care of trauma patients must remain current in ATLS. Neurosurgeons or orthopedic surgeons do not need to have ATLS. ATLS courses are renewed every four years.

***Footnote 7**

Level III TCFs shall have a physician on staff whose job description defines his or her role and responsibilities for trauma patient care, trauma team formation, supervision or leadership, and trauma training or continuing education. This physician acts as the medical staff liaison for trauma care with out-of-hospital medical directors, nursing staff, administration, and higher level TCFs.

2. I am a Level IV hospital, what are the requirements for my surgeons, emergency room physicians, trauma medical director, and mid-level staff, as it relates to Advanced Trauma Life Support (ATLS)?

Trauma Level IV – Footnote 5

In a Level IV State of Wisconsin classified Trauma Care Facility (TCF):

- The Trauma Medical Director (as defined by Footnote 8** in the Level III and IV Hospital Assessment and Classification Criteria) must be current in Advanced Trauma Life Support or any of the other approved alternatives, such as the Comprehensive Advanced Life Support (CALs) or Rural Trauma Team Development Course (RTTDC),

- throughout their term serving as TMD.
- Emergency room physicians caring for the injured patient must have taken ATLS at least once if board certified in emergency medicine. Emergency room physicians who are not board certified in emergency medicine must remain current in ATLS, CALS, or RTTDC.
 - If a nurse practitioner or physician assistant is caring for a trauma patient with no MD back-up, the NP/PA needs to have ATLS, CALS, or RTTDC. If the NP/PA has MD back-up and the MD is present for the trauma activation, then the NP/PA does not have to be ATLS, CALS or RTTDC certified.

Level IV TCFs are not required to provide a general surgeon within timed guidelines, but when TCFs have General Surgeons who participate in the care of trauma patients they must remain current in ATLS. ATLS courses are renewed every four years.

**** Footnote 8**

Level IV TCFs shall have a physician on staff whose job description defines his or her role and responsibilities for trauma patient care, trauma team formation, supervision or leadership, and trauma training or continuing education. This physician acts as the medical staff liaison for trauma care with out-of-hospital medical directors, nursing staff, administration, and higher level TCFs.