

# Children's Emergency Services

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## Module overview

Please note: This module must be read in conjunction with the Fundamentals of the Framework (including the glossary and acronym list), the Preamble to Children's Services and the Emergency Services module.

Emergency services are the front door of the hospital and for many people form their primary contact with the health care system, providing an important interface between the community and the hospital.<sup>1</sup> Emergency services are responsible for the reception, triage, initial assessment, stabilisation and management of patients of all age groups presenting with acute and urgent aspects of illness and injury.<sup>2</sup> Children's emergency services commence at Level 4 and progress to Level 6. A Level 6 children's emergency service is a dedicated paediatric service only.

The role and level of function of a hospital-based emergency service depends on various factors, including the type of facility in which it is located, geographical location, location in the public or private sector, and the place of the facility within a health system network.<sup>3</sup> The level of emergency service provided will also vary depending on availability of support services, staffing expertise, physical design, activity and acuity. Rapid access to surgical services and intensive care services is highly desirable to minimise transfer times of critically ill patients.<sup>4</sup>

The term *emergency department* is generally used to describe facilities ranging from high-level departments with emergency medicine specialists and trainees employed 24 hours a day through to rooms in small rural and remote hospitals staffed by rostered local general practitioners and generalist nursing staff.<sup>5</sup>

The use of the term *emergency department* to describe such a broad range of settings and services can lead to misunderstandings of service capabilities and delivery. A hospital-based emergency service must have amenities and functions greater than the minimum standard for Rural Emergency Service role delineation to be considered an emergency department.<sup>3</sup>

It is recognised that there is no one model of emergency services staffing that will suit all needs, as there is wide variability in roles and work practices between services.<sup>6</sup> Emergency service staffing numbers are dependent on throughput, casemix and capacity. The amount and type of space required for individual emergency units is dependent on a combination of activity, acuity and access to inpatient hospital beds and alternative services.<sup>4</sup>

This module does not include community nurse-run services in metropolitan and regional areas where emergency services are available within a short travelling distance.

## Service requirements

In addition to the requirements outlined in the Fundamentals of the Framework, specific service requirements include:

- must have a dedicated clinical and management system, which records both presentation details and recognised clinical indicators (refer to the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine's [ACEM] policy on standard terminology)
- documented processes exist for review of quality indicators, including clinical incidents and complaints, and it is recommended that regular meetings are held to review these.

## Workforce requirements

In addition to the requirements outlined in the Fundamentals of the Framework, specific workforce requirements include:

- health care workers caring for children in health facilities are competent in paediatric life support
- where possible, all medical, nursing and allied health staff are provided with the opportunity to participate in a variety of identified emergency courses or equivalent accredited courses including:
  - Advanced Paediatric Life Support Course
  - Emergency Nurses Paediatric Course
  - Paediatric Emergency Crisis Resource Management
  - Paediatric Life Support Course
  - Acute and Complex Medical Emergencies
  - Advanced Life Support Course
  - Clinical Rural Skills Enhancement
  - Emergency Crisis Resource Management
  - Emergency Events Management
  - Emergency Management of Severe Trauma
  - Emergency Technical Skills Course for Doctors
  - Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support
  - Trauma Nursing Core Course
  - Paediatric Emergency Nursing Course.

## Level 4 Children's Emergency Service

### Service description

A Level 4 emergency service provides a 24-hour service, which includes triage by qualified emergency staff and advanced care for all presentations. A Level 4 emergency service is typically a mixed-age service, with both adults and children presenting for care and treatment. A Level 4 emergency service may have a dedicated area for paediatric patients within the emergency area and provide a paediatric short-stay unit or equivalent functional area. This is typically in a paediatric emergency department collocated with an adult emergency department.

Length of stay for short-stay beds is typically no longer than 48 hours. Children with complex social issues and pre-existing significant comorbidities should be referred and transferred to a relevant paediatric inpatient service and not admitted to short-stay beds at this level.

This level service has the ability to provide high-quality trauma care to medium and minor level trauma patients, and is capable of stabilising trauma patients until transfer. Depending on the medical staffing, a Level 4 service may be recognised as an emergency department under ACEM standards.<sup>6</sup>

### Service requirements

A Level 4 service requires:

- short-term assisted ventilation capacity until transfer to intensive care services
- invasive monitoring capacity
- when a short-stay unit is provided, children must be cared for in an area separated from adult patients with paediatric workforce and equipment infrastructure in place
- access to Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS) for consultation and/or liaison during business hours
- access to general mental health services for consultation and/or liaison after hours
- where inpatient children's services exist:
  - current emergency standards and guidelines
  - access to education programs to support the local paediatric emergency service.

### Workforce requirements

A Level 4 service requires:

- medical and/or nursing staff member appointed to act as the local paediatric clinical leader in facilities that have attached inpatient children's services

#### Medical

- lead clinician with responsibility for the clinical governance of the service who must be either a Fellow of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (FACEM) or a registered medical specialist/senior medical officer with credentials in emergency medicine
- one registered medical practitioner with experience in emergency medicine exclusively rostered to the department 24 hours
- access—24 hours—to a second registered medical practitioner
- at least one registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency

medicine/senior medical officer on-site 8 hours a day

- emergency departments with a paediatric short-stay unit must have access to a registered medical specialist with credentials in paediatrics 24 hours
- at least one registered medical practitioner who is competent in providing advanced paediatric life support on-site or available for emergency call-in 24 hours
- access—24 hours—to core subspecialties (e.g. orthopaedics, general paediatrics, general surgery)

## Nursing

- dedicated nurse manager (however titled) who may have postgraduate qualifications in management and/or emergency nursing or relevant clinical nursing experience commensurate with the position
- designated senior registered nurse in charge of each shift with relevant clinical knowledge, demonstrated evidence of ongoing clinical competency and relevant clinical experience appropriate to the service being provided
- registered nurse in charge of each shift competent in providing paediatric advanced life support
- at least one registered nurse with emergency and/or paediatric qualifications rostered on each shift in facilities that have a dedicated bay of paediatric beds or inpatient children's services<sup>7</sup>
- access to a registered nurse with paediatric emergency experience for those services that do not have a dedicated bay of paediatric beds or inpatient children's services
- no fewer than two registered nurses present in the unit at all times with access to additional nursing staff, as required
- access—24 hours—to registered nurses who are competent in providing paediatric life support
- registered nurse with successful completion of Emergency Triage Education Kit (ETEK) present in the department at all times

## Allied health

- social worker or health practitioner with competencies in case management and counselling available upon request with access points identified for other allied health professionals as indicated.

## Support service requirements

A Level 4 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
children's anaesthetic	4	
children's intensive care		4
children's medical		4
children's surgical		4
medical imaging	4	
medication	4	
mental health (child and youth)		4
pathology		3

## Level 5 Children's Emergency Service

### Service description

A Level 5 service provides comprehensive trauma care and stabilisation of all trauma patients until transfer. A Level 5 emergency department may provide a specifically designed and separate short-stay unit for children.

### Service requirements

As per Level 4, plus:

- separate waiting area for children
- provision of initial treatment and advanced care for all presentations except for selected subspecialties
- dedicated children's beds collocated within the emergency department
- paediatric short-stay unit (if present) must be separate from adult service and specifically designed
- access—during business hours—to a child and youth mental health service (CYMHS) with a dedicated consultation-liaison service or team, including a registered medical specialist with credentials in child and adolescent psychiatry
- access to dedicated child and youth mental health service inpatient beds.

### Workforce requirements

As per Level 4, plus:

#### Medical

- lead clinician with responsibility for the clinical governance of the service, who is a FACEM or a registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency medicine
- at least one registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency medicine on-site 16 hours a day, 7 days a week<sup>8</sup>
- at least one registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency medicine available for the remaining 8 hours a day, 7 days a week
- in addition to a registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency medicine, at least one medical practitioner who has, or is working towards, formal qualifications in paediatrics within the facility 24 hours

#### Nursing

- designated senior registered nurse/nurse manager in charge of each shift
- registered nurse who is competent in providing paediatric life support on-site 24 hours
- at least three experienced registered nurses present in the department at all times with access to additional acute care registered nurses, as required
- senior registered nurses and paediatric specific nurses who are competent in providing paediatric advanced life support
- where relevant, there must be designated short-stay unit nursing staff in addition to emergency service nursing staff
- may have dedicated paediatric nurse practitioner with relevant advanced training

## Allied health

- as per Level 4 service.

## Support service requirements

A Level 5 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
children's anaesthetic	4	
children's intensive care		4
children's medical		4
children's surgical		4
medical imaging	5	
medication	5	
mental health (child and youth)		4
nuclear medicine		4
pathology	4	

## Level 6 Children's Emergency Service

### Service description

A Level 6 service is a stand-alone service dedicated to paediatric services. This level of service is capable of providing initial treatment and advanced care for all emergency presentations and the full spectrum of trauma care for all seriously ill and injured infants, children and adolescents.

This service is the highest level of service for children's emergency service patients with extensive 24-hour, on-site laboratory, medical imaging and clinical service facilities to support the Level 6 referral role.

### Service requirements

As per Level 5, plus:

- provides 24-hour emergency department and triage by qualified paediatric emergency staff
- psychiatric emergency service with access to a registered medical specialist with credentials in child and adolescent psychiatry available for consultation 24 hours
- access to a wide range of paediatric medical and surgical subspecialties on-site during business hours and available after hours
- active participation in the Queensland injury surveillance data collection.

### Workforce requirements

As per Level 5, plus:

#### Medical

- one full-time lead clinician responsible for clinical governance of the service who is a registered medical specialist with credentials in emergency medicine and is credentialed in paediatric emergency medicine
- at least two registered medical specialists with credentials in paediatric emergency medicine on-site during the day and at least one on-site during the evening, to provide 16 hours cover a day, 7 days a week<sup>6</sup>
- a registered medical specialist with credentials in paediatric emergency medicine available for the remaining 8 hours a day, 7 days a week
- one additional advanced training registrar on-site weekdays, during the day and evening, to provide at least 16 hours of cover
- in addition to the paediatric emergency specialists, at least one registrar training in paediatrics or emergency on-site 24 hours
- sufficient registered medical specialists with credentials in paediatric emergency medicine to provide two shifts (day and evening) per weekend on a 1:4 weekend rotation.

## Nursing

- at least five registered nurses present in the unit at all times
- dedicated senior registered nurse (however titled) with or working towards postgraduate qualifications in emergency nursing who has relevant clinical nursing experience commensurate with the position
- minimum of 50 percent of staff with or working towards emergency qualifications

## Allied health

- access—24 hours—to social worker
- social worker with competency in case management and counselling on-site weekdays, 16 hours a day.

## Support service requirements

A Level 6 service requires:

Service	On-site	Accessible
children's anaesthetic	5	
children's intensive care	5	
children's medical	5	
children's surgical	5	
medical imaging	5	
medication	5	
mental health (child and youth)	5	
nuclear medicine	5	
pathology	5	

## Legislation, regulations and legislative standards

Refer to the Fundamentals of the Framework and the Preamble to Children's Services for details.

## Non-legislative standards, guidelines, benchmarks, policies and frameworks

In addition to what is outlined in the Fundamentals of the Framework and Preamble to Children's Services, the following are relevant to children's emergency services:

- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine
  - G01 Guidelines for Adult and Mixed Emergency Departments Seeking Training Accreditation: Minimum Requirements
  - G23 Guidelines for Constructing an Emergency Medicine Medical Workforce
  - G24 Guidelines on the Implementation of the Australasian Triage Scale in Emergency Departments
  - S12 Statement on Emergency Department Role Delineation
- Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, College of Emergency Nursing Australasia relevant emergency policy documents.  
[www.acem.org.au/](http://www.acem.org.au/) and [www.cena.org.au/](http://www.cena.org.au/)

- Australian College of Critical Care Nurses. ACCCN Resuscitation Position Statement (2006): Adult and Paediatric Resuscitation by Nurses. ACCN; 2006.  
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