

CHAPTER 23-43

STROKE CENTERS AND CARE

23-43-01. Primary stroke centers.

1. Effective January 1, 2010, the state department of health shall designate qualified hospitals as primary stroke centers. A hospital seeking designation as a primary stroke center shall apply to the department for that designation and shall demonstrate to the department that the hospital meets the applicable criteria established by the department.
2. The criteria established by the department for designation as a primary stroke center must include a requirement that the hospital be certified as a primary stroke center by the joint commission on accreditation of health care organizations or by a similar accrediting or certifying organization possessing hospital standards recognized nationally by the health care industry and accepted by the department.
3. The department may suspend or revoke a hospital's designation as a primary stroke center, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, if the department determines the hospital is not in compliance with the requirements of this chapter.
4. Annually, the state department of health shall provide a list of hospitals designated as primary stroke centers to each emergency medical services operation licensed in this state. The department shall post to the department's website a list of the hospitals designated as primary stroke centers.

23-43-02. Stroke system of care task force.

1. The state department of health shall establish a stroke system of care task force. The purpose of the task force is to encourage and ensure the establishment of an effective stroke system of care throughout the state. The state health officer, or the officer's designee, shall serve on the task force. The state health officer shall appoint members to the task force who represent rural hospitals, physicians who treat patients in rural areas, and members representing emergency medical services operations that provide services in rural areas of the state. Members of the task force serve at the pleasure of the state health officer.
2. Before April 1, 2010, the stroke system of care task force shall provide the state department of health with recommendations regarding the establishment of an effective stroke system of care in the rural areas of this state. The initial recommendations must include:
 - a. Protocols for the triage, stabilization, and appropriate routing of stroke patients by emergency medical services operations in rural areas; and
 - b. A plan to provide for coordination and communication between rural hospitals, primary stroke centers, and other support services in order to assure that residents of all regions of the state have access to effective and efficient stroke care.
3. The state health council may adopt rules, based on the task force's recommendations.

23-43-03. Stroke triage - Emergency medical services.

1. Before January 1, 2011, the state department of health shall adopt a nationally recognized standardized stroke-triage assessment tool. The department shall post this standardized stroke-triage assessment tool to the department's website and shall provide a copy to each emergency medical services operation licensed in this state. As a term of licensure under chapter 23-27, each licensed emergency medical services operation shall adopt and implement a stroke-triage assessment tool that is substantially similar to the standardized stroke-triage assessment tool adopted by the department.
2. The department shall work with the stroke task force to establish protocols related to the assessment, treatment, and transport of stroke patients by emergency medical services operations licensed by the state. The protocols may include regional transport

plans for the triage and transport of stroke patients to the closest, most appropriate facility, including the bypass of health care facilities not designated as primary stroke centers when it is safe to do so.

3. Effective April 1, 2012, each emergency medical services operation licensed under chapter 23-27 shall comply with this chapter.

23-43-04. Reports.

Semiannually, each hospital designated as a primary stroke center shall provide the state department of health a report on the center's quality initiatives. The data in the report is an exempt record and is not subject to the state's open records law. However, the department shall make the data in these reports available to state and local government entities that have responsibility for the management and administration of emergency medical services throughout the state. Annually, the department shall compile the report data in aggregate form as a report card and post this report card to the department's website. The results of this report card may be used by the department to conduct training.

23-43-05. Standard of care.

This chapter is not a medical practice guideline and may not be used to restrict the authority of a hospital to provide services for which the hospital has been licensed. This chapter must be interpreted to recognize that all patients should be treated individually based on each patient's needs and circumstances.

23-43-06. Advertisement.

A person may not advertise to the public that a hospital is a primary stroke center unless the hospital has been designated as such under this chapter.