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HOUSE BILL 1864

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State of Washington

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2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Thomas, Griffey, Doglio, Parshley, Rule, Fosse, Timmons, Farivar, Reed, Springer, Ramel, Nance, Cortes, Simmons, Peterson, Macri, Street, Salahuddin, Obras, Pollet, Zahn, and Hill

Read first time 02/06/25. Referred to Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

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.

--- **END** ---