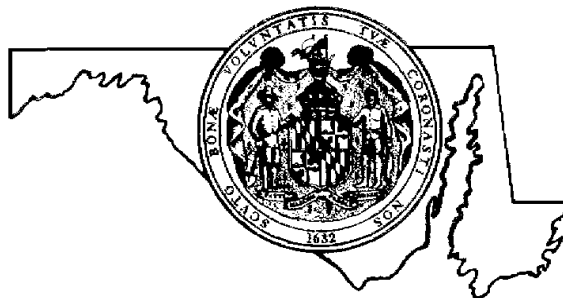


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STATE HEALTH PLAN FOR FACILITIES AND SERVICES:

FREESTANDING MEDICAL FACILITIES

Proposed Permanent Regulations

COMAR 10.24.19

*Written Public Comments
Accepted Until 4:30 pm on October 3, 2016
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COMAR 10.24.19

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**STATE HEALTH PLAN FOR FACILITIES AND SERVICES:
FREESTANDING MEDICAL FACILITIES**

.01 Incorporation by Reference.

This chapter of the State Health Plan for Facilities and Services: Freestanding Medical Facilities (chapter) is incorporated by reference in the Code of Maryland Regulations.

.02 Introduction.

A. Purposes of the State Health Plan.

The Maryland Health Care Commission (the Commission) has prepared this chapter of the State Health Plan for Facilities and Services (State Health Plan) in order to meet current and future health care system needs for all Maryland residents by assuring access, quality, and cost efficiency.

The State Health Plan serves two purposes:

- (1) It establishes health care policy to guide the Commission's actions.

Maryland law requires that all State agencies and departments involved in regulating, funding, or planning for the health care industry carry out their responsibilities in a manner consistent with the State Health Plan and available fiscal resources; and

- (2) It is the legal foundation for the Commission's decisions in its regulatory programs. These programs ensure that changes in services for health care facilities are appropriate and consistent with the Commission's policies. The State Health Plan contains policies, methodologies, standards, and criteria that the Commission uses in making decisions on applications for Certificates of Need (CON), Certificates of Conformance, and Certificates of Ongoing Performance. The CON program is intended to ensure that changes in the delivery of services by regulated health care facilities are needed, cost-effective, and viable. The

Commission also considers the impact of changes in the supply and distribution of health care facilities.

B. Legal Authority of the State Health Plan.

The State Health Plan is adopted under Maryland’s health planning law, Maryland Code Annotated, Health-General (Health-General) §§19-114–19-131. This chapter partially fulfills the Commission’s responsibility to adopt a State Health Plan at least every five years and to review and amend the State Health Plan as necessary. Health-General §19-118(a)(2) provides that the State Health Plan shall include:

- (1) The methodologies, standards, and criteria for CON review; and
- (2) Priority for conversion of acute capacity to alternative uses where appropriate.

C. Organizational Setting of the Commission.

The Commission is an independent regulatory agency, functioning administratively within the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), whose mission includes planning for health system needs. As enumerated in Health General §19-103(c), and of particular relevance to this chapter, the Commission is authorized to:

- (1) Develop health care cost containment strategies to help provide access to appropriate quality health care services for all Marylanders, after consulting with the Health Services Cost Review Commission; and
- (2) Promote the development of a health regulatory system that provides, for all Marylanders, financial and geographic access to quality health care services at a reasonable cost by advocating policies and systems to promote the efficient delivery of and improved access to health care services, and enhancing the strengths of the current health care service delivery and regulatory system.

The Commission has sole authority to prepare and adopt the State Health Plan and to issue Certificates of Need, Certificates of Conformance, Certificates of Ongoing Performance, and exemptions based on the State Health Plan. Health General §19-118(e) provides that the Secretary of DHMH shall make annual recommendations to the Commission on the State Health Plan and permits the Secretary to review and comment on the specifications used in its development. Health-General §19-110(a), however, clarifies that the Secretary does not have power to disapprove or modify any determinations the Commission makes regarding or based upon the State Health Plan. The Commission pursues effective coordination of its health planning functions with the Secretary, with State health-related agencies, and with the Health Services Cost Review Commission in order to assure an integrated, effective health care policy for the State. The Commission also consults the Maryland Insurance Administration as appropriate.

D. Applicability.

Legislation enacted by the Maryland General Assembly in 2010 provides that, after July 1, 2015, the health care facility known as a freestanding medical facility (FMF), defined in Health General § 19-3A-01, can only be established through the issuance of a CON by the Commission.¹ Under Health General §19-120 and COMAR 10.24.01.02A, a CON is required before a new health care facility is established or relocated. A CON is also required before a health care facility can make certain changes in the type or scope of health care services offered or make a capital expenditure that exceeds the applicable capital expenditure threshold found in Health General §19-120(k)(1)(i). This chapter applies to the establishment of a new

¹ Chapters 505 and 506 of the 2010 Laws of Maryland – Freestanding Medical Facilities – Rates. Health General § 19-3A-03(a)(2)

FMF, the relocation of an FMF, and a capital expenditure made by or on behalf of an FMF that exceeds the applicable capital expenditure threshold.

Legislation enacted in 2016² granted the Commission the authority, under certain circumstances, to issue an exemption from Certificate of Need that permits a licensed general hospital to convert to an FMF. The legislation also prohibits a certain hospital from converting to an FMF before a certain date.

E. Effective Date.

An application or letter of intent submitted after the effective date of these regulations is subject to the provisions in this chapter.³

² Chapter 420 (Senate Bill 707), Maryland Laws 2016, effective July 1, 2016

³ Note that a new FMF may not be established in Maryland after July 1, 2015, until this chapter, which contains review criteria and standards required to be established by Section 5 of Chapters 505 and 506 of the 2010 Laws of Maryland, is in effect and the Commission issues a CON finding that the application is consistent with the standards and criteria in this chapter and with CON review criteria, COMAR 10.24.01.08G(3). A letter of intent may only be submitted in accordance with the schedule for receipt of letters of intent and applications regarding establishment of FMFs published in the *Maryland Register* in accordance with COMAR 10.24.01.

.03 Issues and Policies.

Introduction

Use of hospital emergency departments has grown substantially in recent years. Maryland hospitals saw the average daily number of hospital emergency department (ED) visits increase by 65% between 1995 and 2013.⁴ This growth in volume was a major factor in longer wait times for persons seeking treatment at an ED and in overcrowded conditions that can require temporary periods of ambulance diversion and less optimal patterns of emergency transport for patients. In attempting to address these problems, Maryland hospitals have expanded their ED service capacity and improved operational management of their EDs.

Attention has also focused on the development of two alternative models for the delivery of urgent and emergency care. One model, commonly referred to as an “urgent care center,” provides unscheduled, walk-in service to patients with low acuity needs for extended hours of the day. These centers are typically staffed by physicians and other types of health care practitioners, such as physician assistants or nurse practitioners. Some of these urgent care centers have been developed by hospitals. Others have been established as part of corporate “chain” operations, ranging from highly standardized clinic facilities offering a wide range of non-complex diagnostic and treatment services to small clinics with a limited menu of specific services (e.g., vaccinations and immunizations, simple diagnostic screening, physical exams needed for school enrollment or employment) located in drugstores or other types of retail settings. A wide variety of facility, staffing, and operational clinic models can also fall within the urgent care heading, a service offering that is not regulated in Maryland as a specific category of licensed health care facility.

⁴ Report on the Operations, Utilization, and Financial Performance of Freestanding Medical Facilities, MHCC, 2015

Another alternative to the hospital ED that has developed over the last twenty years, with higher acuity of care capabilities than the typical urgent care center, is the “freestanding emergency center,”⁵ which, as discussed below, is called a “freestanding medical facility” in Maryland. Typically, these facilities are distinguished from urgent care centers by the scope of services that they provide. Freestanding emergency centers have more advanced lifesaving, imaging, and laboratory capabilities, and usually operate seven days a week and 24 hours per day. In Maryland, freestanding medical facilities are required to operate 24 hours per day and seven days a week. Freestanding emergency centers have staff that includes physicians and nurses trained and certified in emergency care. In Maryland, an FMF must be an administrative part of an acute care general hospital and be physically separated from the hospital or hospital grounds.⁶ FMFs in Maryland must also comply with Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) and Medicare Conditions of Participation. In other states, such as Texas, individuals or corporations may own a freestanding emergency center.⁷ Independently owned freestanding emergency centers cannot obtain Medicare or Medicaid facility payments.⁸ These facilities are not bound by federal regulations regarding ED operations, including the EMTALA.⁹ However, state laws may require compliance with standards very similar to those in EMTALA.¹⁰

In 2005, the Maryland legislature recognized the freestanding emergency center model through the creation of the licensure category known as “freestanding medical facility” (FMF),

⁵Although a freestanding emergency center is sometimes referred to in literature as a “freestanding emergency department” or a “freestanding emergency room,” Maryland law required DHMH to adopt regulations that prohibit a freestanding medical facility from using the words “emergency department,” “emergency room,” or “hospital.” Health-General § 19-3A-02(b)(5). DHMH regulations, at COMAR 10.07.08.03, provide that an FMF may not use any of these words in its title, advertisements, or signage.

⁶ The only exception to this requirement is when a freestanding medical facility is established as a result of the conversion of a licensed general hospital to a freestanding medical facility that, unless otherwise permitted, shall be located on what previously was hospital grounds.

⁷ Title 25 of the Texas Administrative Code §131.2

⁸ American College of Emergency Physicians (2015). Freestanding Emergency Departments.

<http://newsroom.acep.org/index.php?s=20301&item=30089>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

which applied to a single pilot project.¹¹ The use of the FMF licensure category was expanded to a second pilot project in 2007,¹² and a third license was issued to a facility that pre-dated the 2005 law.¹³ As part of the law authorizing the two pilot FMFs, the Commission was required to conduct a study of the operations, utilization, and financing of the pilot facilities, and produce a report to the General Assembly on its findings.¹⁴ The Maryland Health Care Commission's 2015 *Report on the Operation, Utilization, and Financial Performance of Freestanding Medical Facilities*¹⁵ concluded that the establishment of an FMF may be appropriate: in response to overcrowding of the parent hospital's ED, if the hospital or health care system has already taken steps to reduce inappropriate utilization of the parent hospital's ED; or to improve access to emergency medical care in the service area of the parent hospital. As described in the report, Germantown Emergency Center was established to alleviate overcrowding at its parent hospital, Shady Grove Medical Center, and it appears to have significantly reduced crowding at Shady Grove Medical Center. The FMF pilot period ended on July 1, 2015, and the existing FMFs are not required to obtain Certificate of Need approval.¹⁶ Prior to promulgation of CON regulations for establishing an FMF, staff anticipated potential statutory changes might be enacted in the 2016 legislative session. Legislation enacted in 2016 granted the Commission the authority to

¹¹ Chapters 549 and 550 of the 2005 Laws of Maryland - Freestanding Medical Facilities – Licensing and Pilot Project. Health-General §§ 19-3A-02, 19-3A-03.

¹² The 2005 law authorized the first pilot FMF project, the Adventist HealthCare Germantown Emergency Center (Germantown Emergency Center), which opened in August of 2006. In 2007, the law was amended to add a second pilot FMF project, the Queen Anne's Emergency Center, which opened in October of 2010.

¹³ The Bowie Health Center, which opened in 1979, and operated under Prince George's Hospital Center's general hospital license, was issued a separate license as an FMF license in June of 2007.

¹⁴ The Commission produced two reports on these pilot projects. The first report was submitted to the legislature on February 18, 2010. The final report, entitled "Report on the Operations, Utilization, and Financial Performance of Freestanding Medical Facilities" was submitted on February 3, 2015.

http://mhcc.maryland.gov/mhcc/pages/plr/plr_hospital/documents/chcf_fmfm_report_final_ltr_20150204.pdf

¹⁵ Maryland Health Care Commission (January 15, 2015). Report on the Operation, Utilization, and Financial Performance of Freestanding Medical Facilities.

¹⁶ Health-General §§ 19-3A-03(c) and 19-3A-07(c)(2).

issue an exemption from Certificate of Need when a licensed general hospital is seeking to convert to an FMF.

Access to Care

Timely access to quality medical service is essential for providing treatment to patients with illnesses and injuries that, if left untreated or not treated on a timely basis, may be life-threatening or may lead to impairment. Barriers to emergency care can take many forms,¹⁷ including a lack of timely access due to travel distance,¹⁸ physical transportation barriers,¹⁹ overcrowding in EDs,²⁰ or poor management of patient flow in EDs.²¹ Other barriers may include cultural barriers²² and the high cost of care services.²³

Timely access to ED services in Maryland degraded during the 1990s because of the large increases in use of EDs. During this decade, the number of hospitals declined slightly, and visits per ED treatment space increased. From 2000 to 2014, visits to Maryland EDs increased by nearly 40 percent, from 1.8 million to 2.5 million. However, hospital systems and independent hospitals added treatment space during the last decade at a pace that has offset the growth in the number of ED visits. In 2003, the average number of visits per ED treatment space at Maryland hospitals was just under 1,400 visits per year. By 2013, the average number of

¹⁷ American College of Emergency Physicians (2015) Emergency Department Wait Times, Crowding and Access Fact Sheet. <http://newsroom.acep.org/index.php?s=20301&item=29937>

¹⁸ American Hospital Association (2012). Prepared to Care. American Hospital Association 325 7th Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004. November 2012 www.aha.org.

¹⁹ Griffin, R. and McGwin, G.(2013) Emergency medical service providers' experiences with traffic congestion. *Journal of Emergency Medicine* Feb;44(2):398-405. doi: 10.1016/j.jemermed.2012.01.066. Epub 2012 Aug 9. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22883716>

²⁰ American College of Emergency Physicians (2014). America's Emergency Care Environment. A State-by-State Report Card. <http://www.emreportcard.org/uploadedFiles/EMReportCard2014.pdf>

²¹ American College of Emergency Physicians (2009) Emergency department information systems. ACEP Resolution 22(7) Task Force white paper <http://www.acep.org/workarea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=45756>

²² Scheppers, E., van Dongen, E., Dekker, J., Geertzen, J., and Dekker, J. (2006) Potential barriers to the use of health services among ethnic minorities: a review. *Family Practice* 23 (3); 325-348. <http://fampra.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/3/325.full>

²³ Harkin, T., and Sanders, B. (April 11, 2011). Hospital Emergency Departments: Health Center Strategies That May Help Reduce Their Use. U.S. Government Accountability Office Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. GAO-11-414R.

visits per treatment space had declined to 1,164 visits per year, a 16% reduction. One new hospital was added in Maryland in 2014, and a replacement of two hospitals with a single facility in 2010 eliminated one ED, so there was no net change in the number of hospital EDs during this period. However, two hospitals each developed an FMF. Despite the increase in ED capacity, in January, 2014, the American College of Emergency Physicians, based on the most recent data available at that time, concluded that Maryland's EDs remain overcrowded with long wait times for service.²⁴

The urgent care center model is evolving, and some hospital and non-hospital developers and operators of urgent care centers are likely to establish more centers that approach the staffing and service sophistication of the FMF model. MHCC staff's analysis of patient acuity at Maryland FMFs suggests that FMFs and urgent care centers both serve large numbers of low acuity patients, but urgent care centers manage these patients with lower overhead and staffing costs. The higher acuity patients that FMFs serve bring the patient mix at FMFs closer to the patient mix for EDs, but the average patient acuity at FMFs is still well below the average patient acuity at EDs. Although many patients who utilize FMFs could be adequately served by urgent care centers at a lower cost than that typically experienced in the FMF setting, most urgent care centers in Maryland lack the necessary medical expertise and equipment to diagnose and treat the higher acuity patients that FMFs can handle. In addition, most urgent care centers are not open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. FMFs have the advantages of accessibility and capability over typical urgent care centers.

Maryland's regulatory policy with respect to development of FMFs should be structured to require meaningful analysis of a full spectrum of clinical facilities where non-complex

²⁴ American College of Emergency Physicians (2014). America's Emergency Care Environment, A State-by-State Report Card-2014 <http://www.emreportcard.org/uploadedFiles/EMReportCard2014.pdf>

medical care can be handled without appointments as part of the applicant hospital's justification for proposed development of an FMF. The State's objective in regulation of FMFs should guide creation of the best combination of settings covering the full range of emergent and urgent medical care needs: (1) hospital EDs, critical for those with the most acute medical and surgical needs; (2) FMFs in areas where access to emergency department care is limited due to market characteristics; (3) urgent care centers, which offer greater access and convenience for lower acuity care compared with a conventional physician's office and at a lower cost than an ED or an FMF; and (4) primary care practitioners in non-facility office settings for routine outpatient care of a less urgent nature. Primary care offices, a category that overlaps with self-identified urgent care centers, offer the lowest cost point of care for delivering a large volume of unscheduled medical services sought by patients. However, organizing primary care practitioners in a way that offers more convenient walk-in services, even during the standard 40-hour work week, may not be feasible in the near term.

Cost- Effectiveness and Efficiency of Care

Hospital emergency departments play a vital role in delivering emergent care services. However, the cost of providing these services is high due to the requirement for availability of trained staff and equipment needed for the full range of emergency scenarios 24 hours a day seven days a week. The requirement to provide service to all patients, regardless of a patient's ability to pay and the difficulty of redirecting some patients to more appropriate treatment facilities also raises the cost of EDs. In recognition of the high overhead cost of providing emergency services at EDs and FMFs, these facilities are allowed to charge a facility fee, unlike urgent care centers or physicians' offices. Thus, the same service provided at an ED or an FMF is typically more costly than the same service provided at an urgent care center or in a physician's office.

In order to promote the efficient use of health resources, patients should be served in the lowest cost setting that meets their needs. Unfortunately, for some patients, financial barriers lead them to seek care at an FMF or ED, instead of at an urgent care center. Unlike FMFs, which must treat all patients, urgent care centers and private physicians can limit the payer types that they will accept and can require upfront payment. For patients without insurance or the ability to pay upfront, an urgent care center is usually not an available alternative to an FMF. In the Maryland Health Care Commission's 2015 *Report on the Operation, Utilization, and Financial Performance of Freestanding Medical Facilities*, MHCC staff concluded that the two pilot FMFs in Maryland often treated patients with low acuity medical needs that likely could have been treated in a lower acuity setting, such as an urgent care center.

In some areas of the State, efficient and effective provision of emergent, urgent, and other medical services may involve development of an FMF as an alternative to a general hospital that has become too underutilized to be efficient, as the demand for hospitalization has declined. In other cases, an urgent care model may be more appropriate than an FMF, given the level of demand in the area and the alternative sources available for emergency services.

Quality of Care

In the most recently published report card by the American College of Emergency Physicians, Maryland EDs had the highest ranking in the nation for "Quality and Patient Safety Environment."²⁵ The Institute of Medicine defines quality emergency care as being safe, timely, efficient, effective, equitable, and patient-centered.²⁶ To keep pace with the high performance of

²⁵ American College of Emergency Physicians (2014). America's Emergency Care Environment, A State-by-State Report Card-2014 <http://www.emreportcard.org/uploadedFiles/EMReportCard2014.pdf>, p. 57.

²⁶ Welch, S.J., Asplin, B.R., Stone-Griffith, S., Davidson, S.J., Augustine, J., and Schuur, J. (2010). Emergency department operational metrics, measures and definitions: Results of the second performance measures and benchmarking summit. *Annals of Emergency Medicine* Vol. xx.

Maryland hospital-based EDs, care delivered at an FMF must be performed safely while avoiding harmful delays.²⁷

Because the timeliness of emergency care is associated with the quality of care, time-based process measures that are approved by the National Quality Forum (NQF) and that are included in the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services' (CMS) quality reporting program such as "throughput time" and "time to hospital admission" will be used to evaluate the quality of services provided in FMFs in Maryland.²⁸ These measures will also be used to evaluate a parent hospital's ED. In addition to process of care measures for emergency department care,²⁹ outcome measures will be used to evaluate the quality of services provided by hospitals' EDs.³⁰ It is also essential to evaluate care coordination for patients treated in hospital EDs and FMFs. According to the NQF, poor care coordination is associated with higher costs, increased medical errors, unnecessary patient suffering, and increased ED readmissions. NQF reported that care coordination initiatives could result in an estimated \$240 billion in savings throughout the U.S.³¹

Rate Regulation

In Maryland, the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) regulates rates for hospital services by establishing global budgets for individual hospitals and also establishes budgets for each freestanding medical facility. Due to expected volume shifts from a parent hospital to an approved freestanding medical facility, HSCRC will need to adjust the global

²⁷ International Federation for Emergency Medicine (2012) Framework for Quality and Safety in the Emergency Department. International Federation for Emergency Medicine (IFEM) Symposium for Quality and Safety in Emergency Care, 15th/16th November 2011. <http://www.ifem.cc/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Policies%20and%20Guidelines/Framework%20for%20Quality%20and%20Safety%20in%20the%20Emergency%20Department%202012.doc.pdf>

²⁸ American College of Emergency Physicians (2012) The State of Emergency Medicine Quality Measures <http://www.acep.org/workarea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=88575>

²⁹ "Medicare Hospital Quality of Care Compare." <https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/search.html>

³⁰ Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. "Outcome Measures." <https://www.cms.gov/medicare/quality-initiatives-patient-assessment-instruments/hospitalqualityinits/outcomemeasures.html>.

³¹ NQF-Endorsed Measures for Care Coordination: Phase 3, 2014.

budget of the parent hospital that is granted CON approval to establish a freestanding medical facility. Longer term, as volume potentially shifts, the global budgets of other hospitals may be affected.

Under 2016 changes to Health-General § 19-201(d)(1)(iv), the HSCRC may adopt regulations that specify outpatient services at an FMF that fall within the definition of “hospital services” and thus are rate regulated. This statutory change provides the flexibility for an FMF to establish observation units and other rate-regulated outpatient services, as specified by HSCRC in regulations.

Conversion of General Hospital Campuses to Outpatient Care Centers

The need for an alternative health care facility available as a transition option for a general hospital that has seen declining demand for inpatient care and faces a future of increasing difficulty in maintaining itself as a viable general hospital was first recognized in Maryland 30 years ago. In 1985, Maryland law and regulation established the “limited service hospital” (LSH) licensure category for this purpose. An LSH is an outpatient facility providing unscheduled emergent and urgent care, with staffing and equipment comparable to a hospital emergency room and the ability to be paid at rates that would allow sustainable operation. Conversion of a general hospital to an LSH can be accomplished through approval of an exemption from CON, a regulatory process designed to be quicker, less complex, and less litigious than CON review. While several general hospitals closed in the 1990s, none of these hospitals transitioned to an LSH.

With respect to staffing, services, facilities, and equipment, the FMF is very similar to the LSH and, unlike the LSH, it is a tested model, with three FMFs currently operating in Maryland. In 2016, Maryland law was amended to permit a general hospital that is part of a multi-hospital system to transition from an inpatient facility to an FMF through an exemption from Certificate

of Need. This exemption process is similar in most respects to the process that has been available for a general hospital to transition to an LSH for three decades. Like conversion to an LSH, conversion of a hospital to an FMF will require that the full Commission approve an exemption from CON.

The need for inpatient care is declining in Maryland. Licensed acute care hospital bed capacity in Maryland, which directly tracks changes in acute care bed census, declined by 1,357 beds (12.5%) between FY 2010 and FY 2017.³² Based on the declining demand for inpatient care, some Maryland hospitals may choose to close. Maryland law does not require a hospital to obtain State approval to close. Therefore, it is important to provide a viable transition option.

In January 2014, Maryland and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services agreed to a new Maryland hospital payment model designed to incentivize hospitals to reduce inappropriate use of inpatient facilities and to establish more integrated and coordinated systems of care. This payment model is intended to reward hospitals in proportion to their success in improving the health status of their service area population and reducing potentially avoidable hospital readmissions, hospital acquired conditions, and ambulatory treatable conditions. As Maryland hospitals move from a volume-driven model of care to one driven by value, hospitals are projected to need less inpatient hospital service capacity in the future. The FMF is a facility that can handle a substantial proportion of the demand for care currently provided at a typical hospital emergency room and may be the centerpiece of a campus that provides an array of outpatient services typically provided at a general hospital.

³² FY2017 begins July 1, 2016.

Policy Objectives

The broad policy objectives guiding the Commission's regulation of freestanding medical facilities in Maryland serve as a foundation for the specific standards of this chapter and are as follows:

- Policy 1:** **Emergency services provided at hospitals and FMFs shall be financially and geographically accessible to Maryland's population.**

- Policy 2:** **Emergency services provided at hospitals and FMFs shall be provided in the most cost- effective manner possible consistent with safely and effectively meeting the health care needs of patients needing emergency medical care.**

- Policy 3:** **Resources shall be used efficiently in producing emergency services at hospitals and FMFs. Development of excess emergency medical service capacity should be avoided. Resource capacity development shall match the acuity of patients' needs.**

- Policy 4:** **An FMF shall provide high quality care. Each FMF shall adopt performance measures and improve and adapt those measures over time, shall measure the FMF's level of achievement on the performance measures, and shall continuously seek to improve its level of achievement.**

- Policy 5:** **An acute care general hospital operating an FMF shall assess the primary care needs of the population in its service area and maximize the number of people in its service area who have a regular source of primary care. The hospital shall educate individuals and families in its service areas about appropriately using emergency medical facilities in order to reduce avoidable use of emergency services.**

- Policy 6:** **A hospital operating an FMF shall continuously and systematically improve the quality and safety of patient care. This includes planning, implementing, and optimizing the use of electronic health record systems and connecting to the State designated health information exchange to reap the contribution to improved care coordination, patient safety, and quality improvement that adoption of these tools affords.**

.04 Standards

A. General Standards for Certificate of Need.

(1) The parent hospital shall be the applicant for a Certificate of Need to establish, relocate, or expand a freestanding medical facility.

(2) The applicant shall address and meet the applicable general standards in COMAR 10.24.10.04A in addition to the applicable standards in this chapter.

(3) The applicant shall document that it is consistent with the licensure standards established by the DHMH.

(4) The applicant shall establish and maintain financial assistance and charity care policies at the proposed freestanding medical facility that match the parent hospital's policies and that are in compliance with COMAR 10.24.10.

B. Project Review Standards for Certificate of Need.

(1) Need.

An applicant shall demonstrate that the proposed establishment, relocation, or expansion of an FMF is needed by the parent hospital's service area population.

(a) An FMF may only be established in or relocated to an area within the service area of the parent hospital, upon a showing that the FMF is needed by the population of the service area. The proposed location must also be consistent with CMS regulations regarding provider-based status.

(b) The burden of demonstrating the need for a new FMF or for the expansion of an FMF rests with the applicant. Closure of an existing FMF, in and of itself, is not sufficient to demonstrate the need to establish an FMF.

(c) An applicant for a new FMF, the relocation of an existing FMF, or the expansion of an FMF shall include the following information as part of its demonstration of

need for the project, and fully explain how this information supports its demonstration of need for the project being proposed:

(i) A description of the target population in the existing service area or the projected service area of the proposed FMF and the characteristics of that population including gender, age, insurance status, and physical and mental chronic conditions.

(ii) A description of the historic trends in ED visits and FMF visits by residents of the existing service area of the applicant hospital or FMF and the projected service area of the FMF, the number and location of EDs and FMFs in the applicant hospital's service area, and urgent care services in the hospital's service area, and the existing service area or projected service area of a proposed FMF.

(iii) An estimate of the number of uninsured, underinsured, indigent, and otherwise underserved patients in the existing or projected service area and an analysis of the demand for emergency health care services by each of these patient groups at hospital EDs and FMFs in the existing service area of an existing FMF or the projected service area of a proposed FMF;

(iv) A description of each problem to be addressed through the establishment of a proposed FMF or the relocation of an existing FMF or the expansion of an existing FMF.

1. If overcrowding at the parent hospital's ED is the justification for establishing, relocating, or expanding an FMF, the applicant shall provide pertinent information regarding the capacity of the parent hospital's ED and current utilization patterns including: observation beds; patient volume; acuity levels; number of treatment spaces; wait times; the percentage of patients who spent greater than four hours in the ED or another temporary location after being admitted to the hospital; the average amount of time patients spent

in the ED before being sent home; the percentage of patients leaving the ED without being seen; the history of ambulance diversion at the parent hospital's ED, and staffing patterns before and after overcrowding was identified.

2. If inadequate access and availability of emergency services provided at hospitals and FMFs are the applicant's justification to establish, relocate, or expand an FMF, the applicant shall demonstrate that access barriers exist based on studies or other validated sources of information and shall present a detailed, credible plan for addressing each barrier consistent with the proposed project;

(v) An explanation of how the proposed new, relocated, or expanded FMF will address each problem identified by the applicant;

(vi) A demonstration that the proposed project is consistent with the hospital's current community health needs assessment;

(vii) A demonstration that the number of FMF treatment spaces and the size of the facility proposed by the applicant are consistent with the low range guidance of the most current edition of *Emergency Department Design: A Practical Guide to Planning for the Future*, published by the American College of Emergency Physicians, consistent with reasonably projected levels of visit volume; and

(viii) A demonstration that the applicant hospital, in cooperation with its medical staff and other public and private health care organizations in its community, has attempted to reduce use of its ED and, if applicable, its FMF for non-emergency medical care. This demonstration shall, at a minimum, address: the feasibility of reducing or redirecting individuals in the service area who have non-emergent illnesses, injuries, and conditions, to lower cost alternative providers; and the actions taken by the hospital to accomplish those goals.

(2) Access.

An applicant shall address the following standards regarding access:

(a) The hospital shall demonstrate that its proposed FMF will improve access to emergency services for the population in the proposed service area of the FMF. This analysis shall include information on emergency transport times, return to service times, and other relevant information provided by each emergency medical service operating in any jurisdiction to be served by the proposed new or relocated FMF.

(b) The applicant shall identify problems with access to emergency services provided at hospitals and FMFs for underserved groups including low-income persons, uninsured persons, racial and ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities residing in its existing or proposed service area, and shall develop a plan to overcome barriers to access for each underserved group identified; and

(c) A new or relocated FMF shall be located to optimize accessibility for patients who are currently served in the applicant hospital's service area. The applicant shall consult with each emergency medical service for each jurisdiction to be served by the proposed FMF in making this determination.

(3) Cost and Effectiveness.

An applicant proposing to establish, relocate, or expand an FMF shall demonstrate that the FMF project will cost-effectively achieve appropriate objectives. The applicant shall compare the costs and effectiveness of the proposed project with the costs and effectiveness of at least two alternative approaches for achieving project objectives and shall demonstrate that the project is the most cost effective way to achieve those objectives. Alternative approaches or projects that do not achieve a reasonable breadth and depth of the project objectives identified for the proposed project will not satisfy this requirement.

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(a) In identifying the primary objectives for the proposed FMF or relocated project and at least two alternative approaches that it considered for achieving each of the project's primary objectives, the applicant shall:

(i) Detail the capital cost estimates and operational revenue and expense projections for its proposed FMF project, over a five-year time period;

(ii) Describe and quantify, to the extent feasible, the measures used to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project and alternative projects; and

(iii) Provide, for each alternate approach, estimated capital costs, operational costs, and revenue, for a time period appropriate for evaluating cost effectiveness.

(b) The analysis described in Paragraph (a) of this standard shall demonstrate why other less expensive models of unscheduled care delivery cannot meet the needs of the population to be served and shall account for the availability and accessibility of urgent and primary care services available to the population to be served.

(c) The applicant shall explain its basis for selecting its proposed FMF project and for rejecting each alternative approach identified for achieving the project's primary objectives.

(d) The applicant shall describe each measure that it has taken or will take to comply with the Maryland State Health Improvement Process plan at its existing emergency department including reducing the number of visits due to diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and mental health conditions and its plans to attain such reductions at its proposed FMF.

(e) The applicant shall describe the steps that it has taken or will initiate to promote the coordination of care with providers of primary care, with particular attention to management of chronic disease and mental health conditions, and detail its

evaluation of the success of these processes at its existing ED and address its plans to coordinate care at its existing or proposed FMF and to evaluate the success of those efforts.

(4) Efficiency.

(a) The applicant shall demonstrate that the efficiency of emergency service delivery in its service area will improve as result of its proposed project. The applicant shall:

(i) Provide an analysis of how the establishment, relocation, or expansion of the FMF will affect the efficiency of emergency services delivery for the patient population in the FMF's proposed or existing service area. This analysis shall encompass both emergency transport and hospital ED and FMF operations in the FMF'S proposed or existing service area. This analysis shall be presented to the emergency medical system for each jurisdiction to be served by the proposed FMF for the opportunity to comment;

(ii) Address how process improvement will affect the per visit cost of emergency services and how the process improvement will be accomplished at the FMF and at the parent hospital ED; and

(iii) Describe the actions it has taken to accomplish process improvement in ED service delivery at the parent hospital and the results of those actions.

(b) The applicant shall detail specific actions that it will take to improve the integration of care in ways that reduce the need for episodic visits to the proposed or existing FMF and its ED for persons with chronic medical conditions.

(5) Construction Costs.

The proposed construction cost of the project shall be reasonable and consistent with current industry cost experience in Maryland.

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(a) The projected construction and renovation costs per square foot of the project shall be compared to the most applicable benchmark cost of good quality Class A health care facility construction of hospital emergency department space, given in the Marshall Valuation Service® guide, updated using Marshall Valuation Service® update multipliers, and adjusted as shown in the Marshall Valuation Service® guide as necessary for departmental cost differential, site terrain, number of building levels, geographic locality, and other listed factors. Excluded costs shall also include those portions of the contingency allowance, inflation allowance, and capitalized construction interest expenditure that are based on the excess construction cost.

(b) If the projected cost per square foot exceeds the Marshall Valuation Service® benchmark cost, the excess cost, calculated by pro-rating the annual depreciation, amortization, and long-term interest shall not be recognized in the global budget revenue or total patient revenue cap established for the FMF.

(6) Financial Feasibility and Viability.

The proposed establishment, expansion, or relocation of an FMF shall be financially feasible and shall not have an undue negative effect on the financial viability of the parent hospital.

(a) The applicant shall provide financial projections that outline each assumption used to develop the projections.

(b) The applicant shall demonstrate that:

(i) Its utilization projections are consistent with observed historic trends in ED use by the population in the FMF's projected service area;

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(ii) Its revenue estimates are consistent with utilization projections and, updated as necessary, account for the most recent HSCRC payment policies for FMFs;

(iii) Its staffing assumptions and expense projections are based on current expenditure levels, utilization projections, and staffing levels experienced by the applicant hospital's ED and the recent experience of similar FMFs.

(iv) Within three years of opening, the combined FMF and parent hospital will generate a net positive operating income.

(c) The applicant shall provide documentation of community support for the proposed FMF.

(d) The applicant shall describe any current and projected regional workforce shortages including shortages of emergency-trained physicians, nurses, and ancillary staff, and describe how the applicant will address these recruiting challenges.

(7) Impact.

The proposed establishment, expansion, or relocation of an FMF shall not have an undue negative effect on an existing hospital or FMF.

(a) The applicant shall project the impact of the FMF project on the parent hospital's:

- (i) ED patient volume;
- (ii) ED payer-mix;
- (iii) Financial performance;
- (iv) Ability to maintain specialized staff; and
- (v) Ability to deliver care to indigent and underserved populations.

(b) The applicant shall project the impact of the FMF project on each FMF and hospital ED in the parent hospital's service area and in the projected service area of the proposed or existing FMF. The applicant shall also project the impact of the FMF project on each FMF and hospital ED located outside of the parent hospital's or FMF's service area for each hospital and FMF that has a service area that substantially overlaps the parent hospital's ED or the FMF's current or projected service area. This impact projection shall include impact on payer-mix, case mix intensity, and patient volume. A project shall not have an undue adverse impact on the financial viability of any hospital or other FMF.

(c) An applicant shall provide an analysis of how the cost of emergency services for the health care system will change as a result of the proposed establishment, expansion, or relocation of an FMF, quantifying those projected changes to the extent possible.

(d) Any analysis from HSCRC regarding the impact of a proposed FMF on another hospital's global budget shall be considered by the Commission in evaluating the impact of the proposed FMF.

(8) Quality Improvement

An FMF will provide high quality emergency services and continuously work to improve its quality of care. An applicant shall develop a systematic and comprehensive approach to evaluate quality of care utilizing CMS' quality measures to evaluate health care processes and outcomes.

(a) The applicant shall describe an appropriate quality assurance program and performance measures that will be used by the proposed FMF and parent hospital or that are used by the existing FMF on an ongoing basis to monitor and improve the quality of

care provided. At a minimum, an applicant shall provide information on the following time-based performance measures for each hospital and existing FMF involved in the project:

- (i) Median time from ED or FMF arrival to ED or FMF departure for patients admitted to the hospital or transferred from an FMF to a hospital for admission;
- (ii) Median time from ED or FMF arrival to ED or FMF departure for discharged patients; and
- (iii) Median time patients spent in the ED after a doctor decided to admit them before the patients were transferred to their inpatient rooms; and
- (iv) Median time patients spent in an FMF prior to transfer to a hospital, after a doctor recommended admission; and
- (v) Median time patients spend in the ED or FMF before they were seen by a healthcare professional; and
- (vi) Percentage of patients who left the ED or FMF before being evaluated by a physician.

(b) The applicant shall:

- (i) Include a description of each quality measure used in its quality assurance program for its ED and existing or proposed FMF, including any algorithms that will be used; and
- (ii) Identify appropriate performance targets for each such quality measure for its ED and existing or proposed FMF.

(c) The applicant shall detail mechanisms it will use for monitoring outcomes of patients discharged from its ED and the FMF.

(9) Preference in Comparative Reviews.

In the case of a contested review in which two or more projects are proposed and in which at least one applicant obtains interested party status in opposition to the other applicant's proposed project or in a comparative review in which two or more FMF projects are proposed by hospitals with substantial service area overlap, the Commission shall give preference to a proposed project that meets all applicable review standards and criteria and best demonstrates:

- (a) Cost effectiveness;
- (b) The proven ability to reduce low acuity visits and inappropriate use of the parent hospital's ED and an effective plan for limiting low acuity visits and inappropriate use of the proposed FMF;
- (c) Effective outreach to minority, indigent, and underserved patients in the hospital's service area;
- (d) Research, training, and educational components designed to meet regional needs and for which the applicant's circumstances offer special advantages; or
- (e) The ability to integrate its FMF with primary care delivery so that FMF patients without a primary care practitioner will be referred to appropriate and accessible primary care practitioners for future care.

C. Exemption from Certificate of Need Review to Convert a General Hospital to a Freestanding Medical Facility

- (1) A freestanding medical facility created through conversion from a general hospital shall only retain patients overnight for observation stays.
- (2) Each notice, documentation, or other information regarding a proposed conversion of a general hospital to a freestanding medical facility that is required by Section C of

this regulation or by COMAR 30.08.15.03 shall be provided simultaneously to the Commission and to the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems.

(3) A notice of intent to seek an exemption from Certificate of Need review to convert a general hospital to an FMF shall:

(a) Be filed in the form and manner specified by the Commission, which may require a pre-filing meeting with Commission staff to discuss the proposed project, publication requirements, and plans for a public informational hearing.

(b) Be filed with the converting hospital and its parent hospital as joint applicants;

(c) Only be accepted by the Commission for filing after:

(i) The converting hospital publishes on its website and otherwise makes available to the general public and community stakeholders, at least 14 days before holding a public informational hearing, the hospital's proposed transition plan that addresses, at a minimum, job retraining and placement for employees displaced by the hospital conversion, plans for transitioning acute care services previously provided on the hospital campus to residents of the hospital service area, and plans for the hospital's physical plant and site.

(ii) The converting hospital, in consultation with the Commission, and after providing at least 14 days' notice on the homepage of its website and in a newspaper of daily circulation in the jurisdiction where the hospital is located, holds a public informational hearing that addresses the reasons for the conversion, plans for transitioning acute care services previously provided by the hospital to residents of the hospital service area, plans for addressing the health care needs of residents of the hospital service area, plans of the hospital or the merged asset system that owns or controls the hospital for retraining and placement of

displaced employees, plans for the hospital's physical plant and site, and the proposed timeline for the conversion.

(iii) Within ten working days after the public informational hearing, the converting hospital provides a written summary of the hearing and all written feedback provided by the general public and from community stakeholders to the Governor, Secretary of DHMH, the governing body of the jurisdiction in which the hospital is located, the local health department and local board of health for the jurisdiction in which the hospital is located, the Commission, and the Senate Finance Committee, House Health and Government Operations Committee, and members of the General Assembly who represent the district in which the hospital is located;

(iv) The State Emergency Medical Services Board has determined that the proposed conversion of the general hospital to an FMF will maintain adequate and appropriate delivery of emergency care within the statewide emergency medical services system; and

(v) The applicants provide any additional information determined by Commission staff as necessary for the notice of intent to seek an exemption to convert to an FMF to be complete.

(4) The Commission shall require that a freestanding medical facility created through the conversion of a general hospital remain on the site of, or on a site adjacent to, the converting general hospital unless:

(a) The converting general hospital is the only general hospital in the jurisdiction or is one of only two general hospitals in the jurisdiction and both belong to the same merged asset system; and

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(b) The site is within a five-mile radius and in the primary service area of the converting general hospital.

(5) The parent hospital shall demonstrate compliance with applicable general standards in COMAR 10.24.10.04A.

(6) The applicants shall document that the proposed FMF will meet licensure standards established by DHMH.

(7) The applicants shall establish and maintain financial assistance and charity care policies at the proposed freestanding medical facility that match the parent hospital's policies and that are in compliance with COMAR 10.24.10

(8) Applicants seeking to convert a general hospital to a freestanding medical facility, in addition to meeting the applicable requirements in 10.24.01.04, shall:

(a) Provide the number of emergency department visits and FMF visits by residents in the converting hospital's service area for at least the most recent five years;

(b) Assess the availability and accessibility of emergent, urgent, and primary care services otherwise available to the population to be served, including information on the number and location of other hospital emergency departments, FMFs, and urgent care centers in the service area of the converting hospital or within five miles of any zip code area in the service area of the converting hospital.

(c) Demonstrate that the proposed conversion is consistent with the converting hospital's most recent community health needs assessment;

(d) Demonstrate that the number of treatment spaces and the size of the facility proposed by the applicant are consistent with the low range guidance included in the most current edition of *Emergency Department Design: A Practical Guide to Planning for the*

Future, published by the American College of Emergency Physicians, based on reasonably projected levels of visit volume;

(e) Demonstrate that the number of observation spaces and the size of the observation spaces are consistent with applicable guidance included in the most current edition of *Emergency Department Design: A Practical Guide to Planning for the Future*, published by the American College of Emergency Physicians;

(f) Provide utilization, revenue, and expense projections for the FMF, along with a comprehensive statement of the assumptions used to develop the projections, and demonstrate that:

(i) The utilization projections are consistent with observed historic trends in ED use by the population in the FMF's projected service area;

(ii) The revenue estimates for emergency services are consistent with utilization projections and the most recent HSCRC payment policies for FMFs;

(iii) The staffing assumptions and expense projections for emergency services are based on current expenditure levels, utilization projections, and staffing levels experienced by the applicant hospital's ED and with the recent experience of similar FMFs; and

(iv) Within three years of opening, the combined FMF and parent hospital will generate net positive operating income.

(g) Demonstrate that the proposed construction cost of the FMF is reasonable and consistent with current industry cost experience in Maryland, as provided in Regulation .04B(5) of this chapter.

(h) Demonstrate that the conversion to an FMF will result in the delivery of more efficient and effective health care services including an explanation of why the

services proposed for the FMF cannot be provided at other area hospital EDs, FMFs, or other health care facilities, and demonstrate why other less expensive models of care delivery cannot meet the needs of the population to be served.

(i) Demonstrate that the conversion is in the public interest, based on an assessment of the hospital's long-term viability as a general hospital through addressing such matters as:

(i) Trends in the hospital's inpatient utilization for the previous five years in the context of statewide trends;

(ii) The financial performance of the hospital over the past five years and in the context of the statewide financial performance of Maryland hospitals;

(iii) The age of the physical plant relative to other Maryland hospitals and the investment required to maintain and modernize the physical plant;

(iv) The availability of alternative sources for acute care inpatient and outpatient services that will no longer be provided on the campus after conversion to a freestanding medical facility; and

(v) The adequacy and appropriateness of the hospital's transition plan.

(9) Retention of part of the converting hospital's outpatient surgical capacity.

(a) A converting hospital may, through the exemption process by which a general hospital is authorized to convert to an FMF, seek authorization for outpatient surgical capacity to be co-located with the FMF or adjacent to the FMF, and licensed as a freestanding ambulatory surgical facility. Applicants seeking authorization for ambulatory surgical capacity during the exemption review, shall demonstrate:

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(i) That surgical services that it proposes to provide in the ambulatory surgical facility will be high quality, and comply with COMAR 10.24.11.05A(3);

(ii) That the proposed outpatient surgical capacity is needed, will be properly utilized, and complies with COMAR 10.24.11.05B(2) and .06B; and

(iii) That the design of the operating room and ancillary space for the ambulatory surgical facility is consistent with Section 3.7 of the most current guidelines of the Facility Guidelines Institute.

(b) The converting hospital shall demonstrate the reasonableness of its staffing assumptions for the surgical services to be provided in an ambulatory surgical facility, based on the existing staffing levels for outpatient surgery at the converting hospital.

(c) The converting hospital shall demonstrate that the ambulatory surgical facility will be financially viable.

(d) The ambulatory surgical facility outpatient surgical capacity approved by the Commission to be co-located with or adjacent to an FMF created through the conversion of a general hospital shall meet licensure requirements determined by the Office of Health Care Quality to be appropriate.

(10) The Commission shall grant a requested exemption from Certificate of Need within 60 days of receipt of a complete notice of intent from a general hospital to convert to a freestanding medical facility if the Commission, in its sole discretion, finds that the action proposed:

(a) Is consistent with the State Health Plan;

(b) Will result in more efficient and effective delivery of health care services;

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(c) Will maintain adequate and appropriate delivery of emergency care within the statewide emergency medical services system as determined by the State Emergency Medical Services Board; and

(d) Is in the public interest.

(11) If a general hospital decides that it will close because the Commission denied its request for exemption from Certificate of Need to convert to a freestanding medical facility or because its conversion request was not considered by the Commission as the result of a determination by the State Emergency Medical Services Board that conversion to an FMF would not maintain adequate and appropriate delivery of emergency care within the statewide emergency medical services system, the hospital must provide the notice of closure and hold a public informational hearing required by Health-General §19-120 and Commission regulations adopted pursuant to the statute.

.05 Definitions.

A. In this chapter, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

B. Terms Defined.

(1) “*Acuity level*” means a five-level emergency department triage algorithm that uses the Emergency Severity Index (ESI) developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality and provides clinically relevant stratification of patients into five groups from the most to the least urgent, with Level 1 life-threatening, Level 2-emergent/high-risk, Level 3-urgent, Level 4-less urgent, and Level 5-nonurgent.

(2) “*Acute care general hospital*” or “*hospital*” means a hospital classified as a general hospital and defined in Health General § 19-307(a)(1)(i).

(3) “*Community health needs assessment*” means the assessment made at least once every three years by a hospital that qualifies as a nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and that is required by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 42 U.S.C. 18001, in which the hospital must define the community it serves and assess the health needs of that community.

(4) “*DHMH*” means the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;

(5) “*Emergency medical condition*” means a medical condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity including severe pain, psychiatric disturbances, and symptoms of substance abuse such that the absence of immediate medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in:

(a) Placing the health of the individual in serious jeopardy;

(b) Placing the health of a pregnant woman or unborn child in serious jeopardy;

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- (c) Serious impairment to any bodily function;
- (d) Serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part; or
- (e) With respect to a pregnant woman who is having contractions:
 - (i) Inadequate time to effect a safe transfer to another hospital before delivery; or
 - (ii) The transfer posing a threat to the health or safety of the woman or the unborn child.
- (6) “*Emergency services*” means health care services provided to evaluate and, as appropriate, treat emergency medical conditions.
- (7) “*EMTALA*” means the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, 42 U.S.C. §1395.
- (8) “*Freestanding medical facility*” (FMF) means a health care facility that:
 - (a) Provides medical and health care services;
 - (b) Is an administrative part of an acute care general hospital;
 - (c) Is physically separated from the hospital or hospital grounds;
 - (d) Operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week;
 - (e) Complies with EMTALA and Medicare Conditions of Participation;
 - (f) Has the ability to rapidly transfer complex cases to an acute care general hospital after the patient has been stabilized; and
 - (g) Will maintain adequate and appropriate delivery of emergency medical care within the statewide emergency medical services system as determined by the Maryland State Emergency Medical Services Board.

(9) “*Global budget revenue*” or “*global budgeting*” means the methodology used by the Health Services Cost Review Commission to control increases in total hospital revenue by establishing a fixed annual revenue cap for each hospital under a global budget revenue agreement with the Health Services Cost Review Commission.

(10) “*Jurisdiction*” means one of the 23 counties of Maryland or Baltimore City.

(11) “*Maryland State Health Improvement Process plan*” means the most current plan developed by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and currently found at <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

(12) “*Median time from ED or FMF arrival to ED or FMF departure, for patients admitted to the hospital or transferred from an FMF to a hospital for admission*” means the National Quality Forum, National Voluntary Consensus Standard for Emergency Care-Phase 2 measure ID 0495.

(13) “*Parent hospital*” means the acute care general hospital applying to establish, relocate, or expand an FMF in its service area and of which the FMF is or will be an administrative part.

(14) “*Quality assurance program*” means health care activities and programs intended to assure or improve the quality of care.

(15) “*Quality measures*” includes evidence-based performance measures, accountability measures, and outcome measures endorsed by the National Quality Forum and CMS.

(16) “*Service area*” means the zip code areas from which, cumulatively, 85% of patient visits to a hospital’s ED or an FMF originate, inclusive of the zip code areas ranked from highest to lowest providing the highest proportion of the hospital ED’s or FMF’s total

patient visits in the most recent twelve-month period for which patient origin information is available.

(17) “*Substantial service area overlap*” means that the service area of a health care facility overlaps with the service area of another health care facility by at least 25% of the service area population of either health care facility based on the zip code areas that are part of the service area of both health care facilities.

(18) “*Time to hospital admission*” refers to the discharge of a patient from an FMF to the next appropriate phase of care including admission to the parent hospital or transfer to another hospital or facility.

(19) “*Throughput time*” is the length of time a patient spends in an ED or FMF during triage, registration, and care processes.

(20) “*Urgent care*” means the provision of medical services on a walk-in basis for primary care, acute or chronic illness, and injury.