

Save Florida's Trauma Care

It's Critical



FAST FACT: If you're seriously injured, your chances of survival increase by 15-20% if you're treated at a trauma center.

BACKGROUND

The Alliance to Save Florida's Trauma Care is working to establish a well-coordinated and financially healthy trauma system. We have a public health crisis that affects people from all walks of life. The care provided at our trauma centers can mean the difference between life and death, or the difference between recovery and permanent injury.

A trauma center within a hospital is NOT an emergency room. Hospital emergency rooms are capable of treating the array of illnesses and injury that occur in everyday life. A trauma center is a hospital facility capable of dealing with the most severe, life-threatening situations. This includes patients who have experienced an injury or wound caused by force, multiple internal injuries, burns, multiple broken bones and severe shock.

Florida's trauma system was created in 1982 when the Legislature passed the state's first trauma legislation. In 1982, there were 50 trauma centers, but by 1986, only 33 remained. In 1987, it was evident that there were financial problems facing Florida's trauma care providers. Florida's Healthcare Cost Containment Board (HCCB) was directed by the Florida Legislature to determine the financial magnitude of the problem and recommend solutions. The HCCB study showed that 66 hospitals lost approximately \$41 million treating trauma patients. The HCCB recommended several general actions—including increasing motor vehicle registration fees—to alleviate the trauma care financial problems. The 1989 Florida Legislature considered and came close to adopting the key recommendations, but felt they needed more implementation specifics before it could provide the substantial funding required by the recommendations.

The 1989 Florida Legislature recognized that declining trauma care in Florida was a critical issue and made the following recommendations:

- Provide an annual funding level of \$66.8 million to compensate trauma centers for losses associated with trauma patients
- Increase motor vehicle registration fee by \$6.00 and study the role alcohol/firearms play in trauma for future funding
- Add specific patient care performance outcome criteria to existing equipment, staffing & performance criteria
- Divide the state into 19 trauma service areas
- Fund development of the pediatric component of the trauma care system
- Increase the personal injury protection (PIP) minimum from \$10,000 to \$20,000
- Provide a maximum of \$1 million to each five trauma service areas where no centers exist
- Increase Medicaid emergency medical transportation rates
- Continue studies of Florida's trauma system

The majority of this legislation was never implemented.

In 1990, a state-established trust fund was created, but no money was appropriated for the fund. Today, 20 of the 239 acute care hospitals in Florida are trauma centers. The **Florida Senate** November 2003 Interim Report states, *"The need for a viable trauma and emergency response system is now greater than ever. Expansion of the current trauma network has been at a standstill for several years and, if any facility loses its designation, the network may diminish significantly."*

Trauma centers have specialized life-saving care that decrease the chance of someone being disabled or losing their life. When trauma care is not available, either because there is no trauma-certified center nearby or it has closed due to lack of funding, serious injuries may result in disability or loss of life. These costs of operating the state's trauma centers are miniscule in relation to the overall losses to Florida's economy (estimated at \$2 to \$4 billion annually) if we did not have trauma centers.

