

## MEMO

**To:** State of Iowa EMS Service Programs, EMS Clinicians, and Trauma Centers

**From:** Bureau of Emergency Medical and Trauma Services (BEMTS)

**Date:** July 30, 2025

### **Guideline for the Field Triage of Injured Patients**

The decision to adopt the *2021 National Guideline for the Field Triage of Injured Patients* as reference into [Iowa Administrative Rule Chapter 641-135](#) was made to ensure that EMS clinicians are equipped with nationally vetted, evidence-informed guidance that supports consistent, high-quality triage practices tailored to Iowa's unique landscape. These guidelines are designed to direct severely injured patients to the most appropriate facility, based on injury severity, available resources, and local conditions—while honoring EMS clinicians' professional judgment and medical direction.

BEMTS recognizes that in regions with multiple high-level trauma centers in close proximity, effective trauma care depends on collaboration between EMS agencies and hospital stakeholders. EMS agencies and their Medical Directors maintain the authority to develop local protocols aligned with the guidelines, tailored to regional needs and operational realities, acknowledging that a uniform statewide approach isn't feasible.

In partnership with EMS and trauma stakeholders, BEMTS has been intentional in designing a trauma system that values the expertise of EMS professionals and supports informed local decision-making. Field clinicians are credentialed to assess injury severity, understand local hospital capabilities and variabilities, and exercise clinical judgment—skills that are foundational to prehospital care. Destination decisions should prioritize the patient's best interest in the moment. A minor modification was made to the national guideline language to better reflect Iowa's specific needs while preserving local flexibility.

BEMTS expects EMS agencies and trauma centers to participate in ongoing performance improvement efforts to evaluate triage decisions, address gaps, and optimize system performance. This continuous feedback loop is key to an effective trauma system.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to excellence in trauma care and look forward to ongoing collaboration as we implement these guidelines throughout the state.