

641—150.1(135,77GA,ch1221) Purpose and scope. Hospitals within the state shall determine whether to participate in Iowa's regionalized system of perinatal health care and shall select the hospital's level of participation in the regionalized system. A hospital having determined to participate in the regionalized system shall comply with the rules appropriate to the level of participation selected by the hospital.

Iowa's regionalized system of perinatal health care helps practitioners in rural Iowa to rapidly access specialty services for their patients even though such services may not exist in the local community. This is predicated on several factors, including the willingness of certain hospitals in moderate-to-large Iowa cities to provide specialty services and the presence of a functional system of patient transportation. These rules address how participating Iowa hospitals relate to the regionalized system and suggest a level of functioning which should identify the role each participating hospital plays in the system.

The following rules present a description of the levels of care among Iowa perinatal hospitals. The levels are as follows: Level I hospital, Level II hospital, Level II regional center, Level II regional neonatology center, and Level III center. The department is very much aware of the need for organization of limited resources in a rural state. Accordingly, the rules are designed to encourage and support the presence of a Level II regional center in areas not populous enough to support a Level III center.

These rules are not meant to hold Iowa hospitals and Iowa perinatal professionals to an impractical ideal. Although the rules are clearly not intended to serve as standards, they do specify particulars when feasible. For example, specification of a designated level of care for a hospital should be clearly evident from the descriptions. Levels of care are designated by the functional capacity of the hospital. Thus, it may be possible to have a number of Level II hospitals or Level III centers in one city.

The primary purpose of designation is to ensure Iowa perinatal patients appropriate care as close to their homes as possible. In an ideal situation, no community hospital would be more than 50 miles from a perinatal center. Unfortunately, Iowa's low population density precludes this. Accordingly, Iowa developed a network of regional centers.

The further intent of these rules is to ensure that when a hospital markets itself at a particular level of perinatal care, it is capable of providing that care. The public is entitled to know the level of functioning. The rules provide the framework to be used in defining and evaluating the level of perinatal services being offered.