





JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
MAINE EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
152 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333



MICHAEL SAUSCHUCK
COMMISSIONER

WIL O'NEAL
DIRECTOR

CLINICAL BULLETIN			
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#2025-3-26-01	Hospital Closure of OB Services		March 26, 2025
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Approved By:	Dr. Matthew Sholl, Maine EMS Medical Director 		Wil O'Neal, Maine EMS Director 

Hospital Closure of Obstetric Services

Recently, two Maine hospitals, Inland Hospital (March 1, 2025) and Waldo County Hospital (April 1, 2025), have closed or are pausing their obstetric service lines. This comes in the wake of several prior closures earlier in the 2010s and 2020s. This clinical bulletin intends to remind EMS clinicians and agencies of existing clinical resources, inform EMS clinicians and agencies of potential educational resources, and discuss means of maintaining situational awareness regarding changes in healthcare resources.

Existing Clinical Resources

In the 2021 Protocols, Maine EMS introduced the "Obstetric Emergencies" protocol as well as additional protocols supporting the care of pregnant and postpartum patients. These have been updated in the 2023 Maine EMS Protocols with the addition of postpartum oxytocin, as well as changes to the Seizure Protocol focused on pregnant and recently postpartum patients. As hospital obstetric services close, the EMS system could be impacted in a number of different ways, including, but not limited to:

- 1) Increased numbers of planned home births with unplanned complications requiring hospital transfer,
- 2) Increased number of unplanned field births as patients travel longer distances for Obstetric services, and
- 3) Increased potential for interfacility transfers when patients requiring obstetric care inadvertently arrive initially at a hospital without those services.

Given these possibilities, Maine EMS and the MDPB urge EMS clinicians to review the existing protocols and familiarize themselves with the current resources and recommendations. The

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PHONE: (207) 626-3860

TTY: (207) 287-3659

FAX: (207) 287-6251

With offices located at the Central Maine Commerce Center, 45 Commerce Drive, Suite 1, Augusta, ME 04330

current protocols discuss specific clinical steps to take in cases of a variety of clinical scenarios and discuss acceptable transfer times for patients suffering OB-related complaints. Protocols of particular importance include: Gold 9, Gold 18, and Pink 4 through 12.

It can be difficult, even for obstetricians, to predict the timing of delivery. There may be times in which delivery is imminent and occurs in the field. Signs of imminent delivery include crowning or contraction interval of 2 minutes or less. Whenever possible, however, pregnant patients who are in labor or who have a pregnancy complication are best managed in a hospital with obstetric services. This is especially true for complications that are best managed in the OR (e.g., cesarian section, prolapsed cord, or some breech births). The protocols currently state to transport to obstetric capable hospitals as long as the total transport time is less than 45 minutes and otherwise transporting to the closest emergency department. If questions arise regarding the best hospital destination, please consult On-Line Medical Consultation.

Educational Resources

In response to these closures, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services Perinatal Coordinators and the Maine EMS for Children Program are organizing Basic Life Support in Obstetrics (BLSO) courses, focusing attention on the areas immediately impacted by the closures. These courses, or equivalent courses, are excellent resources regarding the management of OB Emergencies and are intended for all scopes of practice, including EMTs, AEMTs, Paramedics, Nurses, Advanced Practice Providers, and Physicians. Many who have attended these classes have appreciated the mix of hospital and pre-hospital providers attending. Please contact Maine EMS's EMS-C Program Manager, Marc Minkler at Marc.A.Minkler@maine.gov for information regarding these educational opportunities as funding allows.

In addition, courses focused on neonatal resuscitation (such as NRP for Paramedics or AAP NRP for First Responders for EMTs) as well as courses focused on the inter-facility transport of neonates, such as STABLE, can be excellent resources for EMS clinicians and EMS agencies.

How Can I Maintain Situational Awareness as Hospital OB Resources Change?

Maine's Department of Health and Human Services has continually updated it's "Map of Maine Hospitals with OB Services" document. Maine EMS's EMS for Children Program has maintained the most updated version of this on the Maine EMS Website at: <https://www.maine.gov/ems/EMSpediatriccare>. This lists the *current* obstetric resources at hospitals.

Recognizing there are dynamic factors impacting hospitals' abilities to maintain obstetric services, ongoing, preemptive communication between local hospital(s), EMS Agency Leadership and EMS Service Medical Directors will be helpful in building an understanding of all

available resources at any hospital in your community. Many obstetric leaders in Maine expect the current closures will not be the last. Ongoing dialogue with hospitals in your catchment area can be essential for maintaining awareness of upcoming changes in hospital resources.

Maine EMS and the Medical Direction and Practices Board recognize the impact of these changes on the EMS system, as well as the health care system as a whole. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your ongoing efforts to continually provide patients the opportunities for excellent outcomes.