

Hospitals Support SB12 to Align Kentucky's Level IV Trauma Standards

Expanding Access to High Quality Care in Rural Communities

The Importance of Trauma Designations

The **American College of Surgeons (ACS)** trauma designation ensures hospitals have the **resources, structure, and protocols** needed to delivery timely, coordinated trauma care. It is not a ranking, **it's a quality framework** that helps ensure patients receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Designation elevates the entire hospital, not just the emergency department. through credentialing, readiness, and continuous training. **Level IV trauma centers are especially critical in rural and medically underserved communities**, where they often serve as the only local resource to provide **initial evaluation, stabilization, and transfer.**

Current KY Level IV Trauma Standards

Kentucky's current Level IV regulation requires **24-hour physician-only emergency department coverage**, with onsite physician availability for trauma activations—an **unusually restrictive standard for rural hospitals**. Due to persistent emergency physician workforce challenges, this standard is often unattainable and has become a **barrier to maintaining and expanding rural trauma access.**

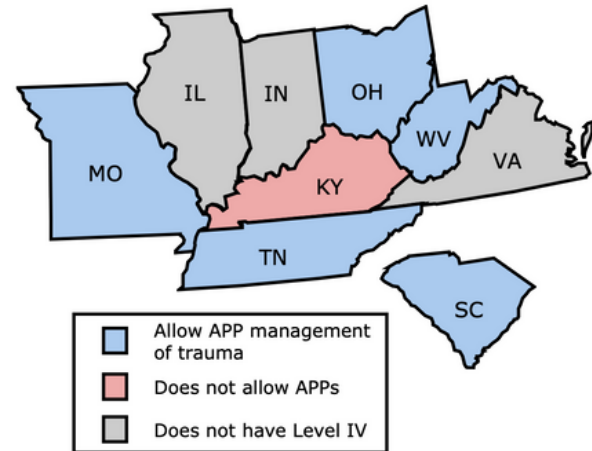
National Level IV Trauma Standards

In contrast, **national trauma standards** allow Level IV trauma centers to meet 24/7 emergency coverage requirements through **a physician or an advanced practice provider (APP)** operating within a physician-led model. Both the **American College of Surgeons (ACS)** and the **American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)** recognize the role of APPs with real-time physician supervision, including **off-site (telehealth) supervision** in rural facility types such as Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and Rural Emergency Hospitals (REHs).

Trauma Standards Utilized by Surrounding States

Every surrounding state with Level IV Trauma allows APPs to independently manage trauma cases within a physician-led framework. As a result, **West Virginia supports approximately 34 Level IV trauma centers**, compared to **about 20 in Kentucky**, despite having less than half of Kentucky's population.

“A Level IV facility must have 24-hour emergency coverage by a **physician or midlevel provider**”
American College of Surgeons (ACS)¹”



“ACEP acknowledges that there are currently workforce limitations in specific CMS-designated facility types in which **supervision of a PA or NP by an emergency physician may be provided offsite** by Telehealth means as follows: **critical access hospitals (CAHs) and rural emergency hospitals (REHs)**”
American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP)²”

SB 12 Aligns Kentucky's Level IV Trauma Standards with National Guidelines and Improves Access to High-Quality Trauma Care in Rural Communities

1.American College of Surgeons. Resources for Optimal Care of the Injured Patient: 2022 Standards (Revised July 2025).Chicago, IL: ACS; 2025.

2.American College of Emergency Physicians. Guidelines Regarding the Role of Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners in the Emergency Department. Dallas, TX: ACEP; June 2023.