

FROM: St. Joseph County EMS Committee (SJCEMSC) Medical Directors
TO: All SJCEMSC Affiliated EMS Provider Organizations and Personnel
RE: Beacon Granger Hospital as a Destination Hospital for EMS Patients
DATE: October 14, 2019

Dear Provider:

As you know, the SJCEMSC is sponsored by Beacon Health System-Memorial Hospital of South Bend (MHSB) and Saint Joseph Health System-Mishawaka Medical Center (SJHS), formerly known as "Saint Joe Mishawaka." Beacon Health System-Beacon Granger Hospital (BGH) will be a new St. Joseph County hospital opening later this month. We know you have questions about its capabilities and, more importantly, about whether and which EMS patients may be transported to that facility. This memorandum is intended to provide preliminary instruction and guidance.

BGH will:

- Operate under the licensing of MHSB; it will not be an SJCEMSC Sponsoring Hospital.
- Be open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
- Have 16 Emergency Department (ED) beds and 8 inpatient beds.
- Have cardiac monitoring and telemetry, including for the inpatient beds.
- Be staffed by emergency physicians and nurses, with additional ancillary personnel.
- Have general radiology, CT, ultrasound, and lab capability.
- Have "emergency release" blood products primarily intended for use during transport out.
- Have standard EMS communications.
- Have backup personnel available on a delayed basis.

BGH will **not** have:

- An operating suite of any kind (general ORs, GI lab, Special Procedures rooms, etc.).
- An Intensive Care Unit of any kind (adult, pediatric, neonatal, etc.).
- A cardiac catheterization lab or any of its capabilities.
- A Childbirth Unit (also known as Labor and Delivery) or obstetrical unit of any kind.
- Interventional radiology capability, including mechanical thrombectomy for ischemic stroke.
- A blood bank.
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) capability.
- Comprehensive acute psychiatric services.
- Backup personnel available on an immediate basis.
- Stroke Center Certification.
- Trauma Center designation.

Licensing and health system affiliation issues aside, from an EMS Destination Hospital perspective, BGH shall be considered a separate entity from MHSB. The capabilities of BGH, though adequate for many patients, are undeniably limited compared to those of MHSB and SJHS. Although some patients seen at BGH will be admitted there, where they will receive observation or inpatient care at the direction of a hospitalist, just as at MHSB and SJHS, a number of patients will require transport to another hospital, either for admission or for services unavailable at BGH. Such transports will be conducted primarily by Beacon Health Transport (BHT), and one or more BHT ambulances will be stationed at BGH at all times.

Patients transported to the ED by ambulance are generally sicker than those who present on their own. We also believe that secondary transport for definitive care does not represent optimal patient management when there are no compelling reasons not to initially transport the patient to likely definitive treatment. Because it is very difficult for EMS Personnel to predict which ambulance patients will require admission, much less critical care or other specialized services, we cannot recommend BGH as an EMS-selected Destination Hospital for ambulance patients at this time. Therefore, **EMS Personnel shall not select or recommend BGH as a Destination Hospital for transported patients.** Although some EMS Systems have supplemental education programs and criteria to assist EMS Personnel in recommending among healthcare facilities of varying capabilities, we do not, at this time, have a program or criteria to permit EMS Personnel to select or recommend BGH as a Destination Hospital, even if it is the closest hospital. The only exception to this would be the extremely unusual situation in which a patient has an acute airway management crisis of such urgency that it will not permit transport to the nearby SJHS.

Nevertheless, EMS patients in Indiana have the right to be transported, distance and EMS resources permitting, to the hospital of their choice. The vast majority of SJCEMS System patients are currently transported to either MHSB or SJHS. For most, MHSB and SJHS are considered equivalent in capability, so patient choice is not usually an issue unless there is an exceptional situation. The primary exceptions to this equivalency are major trauma, pediatric intensive care, emergency hyperbaric oxygen treatment, and acute ischemic stroke with likely large vessel occlusion. Secondary exceptions include weather conditions (primarily in the winter), in which safety concerns override other considerations, and geography (i.e., the patient requests transport to the farther hospital but his/her life/limb would be endangered by not transporting him/her to the closer hospital). With regard to Destination Hospital decision-making, guidance for these exceptions is already provided by the SJCEMSC.

Patients who request transport to BGH and who have any of the following:

- **A primary or secondary exception (see above) under SJCEMSC guidelines**
- **Suspected STEMI**
- **Apparent life-threatening illness or instability**
- **Pregnancy and gestational age \geq 17-weeks, with pregnancy-related symptoms**
- **Acute psychiatric crisis (e.g., requires restraint, 1:1 observation, or detention)**

should be *strongly discouraged* from transport to BGH. If necessary, EMS Personnel should contact an emergency physician at MHSB for assistance. Situations in which a patient refuses EMS guidance under current exceptions are rare now and are likely to remain rare after BGH opens.

Patients for whom none of the above apply, who request transport to BGH, may be transported there but should be given the following disclaimer:

Beacon Granger Hospital has an Emergency Department and some inpatient services. However, it does not have all the services available at Memorial Hospital of South Bend and St. Joe Mishawaka, such as operating rooms and intensive care units. If you require services unavailable at Beacon Granger Hospital, you may need additional transport for further care. Since you have specifically requested transport to Beacon Granger Hospital, we are authorized to transport you there at your request. However, we make no representation or warranty regarding what services you will need or whether you will require additional transport for those services.

In the end, barring a weather or other EMS safety or resource exception, the Destination Hospital decision is up to the informed patient. Our intent is to, in the course of EMS care, help the patient make the most informed decision, and the one that best meets the patient's medical needs. We hope this initial guidance with regard to BGH is helpful; we are aware it is not comprehensive, or perfect, and it won't cover every what-if scenario. As we develop experience with the operations of BGH in our community, we will revise this guidance. In the meanwhile, Online Medical Consultation is available and should be requested for specific cases when necessary. In the event of community-wide crises, such as ambulance diversion or mass casualty incidents, we will provide additional guidance when such situations occur.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

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EMS Medical Directors
St. Joseph County EMS Committee