



December 11, 2023

John Goodnow, CEO  
Benefis Health System  
1101 26<sup>th</sup> Street South  
Great Falls, MT. 59405

Dear Mr. Goodnow

Benefis Health System underwent a review for Trauma Center designation on November 1-2, 2023. This process included an American College of Surgeons verification site visit along with a Montana Trauma System assessment for consideration as a Regional Trauma Center.

The State Trauma Care Committee's Performance Improvement/Designation Subcommittee met on November 28th to review the site visit findings and to determine an appropriate Trauma Center designation status for Benefis Health System. Given deficiencies noted across several domains including leadership, clinical care, system integration, and registry participation, the subcommittee made the consensus recommendation to designate Benefis Health System as a provisional Montana Community Trauma Hospital through November 2024. Please note, during the verbal exit interview at the conclusion of the review, it was suggested that a recommendation of designating the facility as an Area Trauma Hospital would be made to the Designation Subcommittee. That recommendation was made and taken into consideration by the subcommittee. Ultimately, the subcommittee felt that a designation as a Community Trauma Hospital was more appropriate at this time.

The reviewers submitted their report detailing findings and recommendations from the site visit to the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) for approval. DPHHS approved the report and a copy of that is included with this letter.

As an important part of the central region's trauma system, we want to see Benefis Healthcare succeed in restoring core components of a strong designated trauma program. As such, if Benefis is able to meet the outlined requirements by the July 1, 2024, deadline, we will provisionally upgrade your designation status to an Area Trauma Hospital (ATH) for the remainder of the 1-year provisional period through November 2024.

The following documentation must be provided to the EMSTS office by July 1, 2024:

1. Evidence that a trauma medical director and trauma coordinator have been hired and that they have both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that Benefis Healthcare meets facility designation requirements.
2. Evidence of the trauma medical director and trauma coordinator are meeting regularly, at least monthly, including documentation of primary and secondary review of trauma cases.
3. Evidence of initiation of at least one performance improvement project on a case that was deemed to have opportunity for improvement.



4. Documentation of monthly trauma committee meetings over the past 6 months including topics discussed, documentation of case summaries, meeting minutes, full attendee list and evidence of at least 50% trauma surgeon attendance.
5. Ensure that the trauma registry data submission is consistent with Montana Administrative Rule 37.104.3014
6. Provide copies of reviewed, approved, and dated trauma activation guidelines and any new clinical care guidelines.

Please note that if the outlined requirements are not fully met by the July 1, 2024, deadline, Benefis Healthcare will not only be ineligible for the provisional upgrade to an Area Trauma Hospital status but will lose state trauma center designation altogether after that date. Loss of designation prohibits the facility from billing trauma response fees and advertising as a trauma center. We urge Benefis leadership to view the prerequisite corrective actions as top priorities over the next 6 months. The Montana Trauma System aims to partner with hospitals to elevate care for injured patients; however, we are bound to established designation criteria standards requiring substantive progress on identified deficiencies within reasonable timeframes to maintain center endorsements. We trust Benefis Healthcare shares our commitment to restoring trauma center verification milestones and look forward to mutually constructive work ahead.

This proposed pathway allows for an incremental growth toward consideration as a Regional Trauma Center in the future. Following the July 1st documentation submission, a focus review visit will be conducted in November 2024 to evaluate whether Benefis Healthcare meets criteria to sustain an ATH designation or needs additional corrective actions to solidify trauma program foundations before re-attempting a higher designation level.

We believe Benefis Healthcare plays an integral role serving injured patients across the central region's continuum of trauma care. As such, we want to provide every opportunity for your trauma program to thrive, including this possibility of a mid-year status upgrade contingent on successfully meeting the outlined prerequisites. Please let us know if you have any other questions surrounding this potential designation advancement process or how we can further support your work in trauma system participation. Your facility designation period is valid from November 2023-November 2024 if you meet the requirements outlined above.

If the facility wishes to appeal the Department's decision, it must request a hearing in writing within 30 calendar days after receipt of this notice, per Montana Administrative Rule 37.104.3031. The request must be in writing and submitted to the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Fair Hearings, P.O. Box 202953, Helena, MT 59620-2953.

GREG GIANFORTE  
GOVERNOR



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC HEALTH &  
HUMAN SERVICES**

CHARLIE BRERETON  
DIRECTOR

Please reach out with any questions. We hope Benefis will embrace this opportunity to refocus efforts toward restoring key components of a strong, designated trauma program benefiting injured patients across the central region.

Sincerely,

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cc

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