2021 National Assessment of Pediatric Readiness of U.S. Emergency Departments During the COVID-19 Pandemic

If all EDs were pediatric ready, at least 1,400 children’s lives could be saved each year.2

In 2021, the National Pediatric Readiness Project — led by the federal Emergency Medical Services for Children Program3 in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Emergency Physicians, and the Emergency Nurses Association — assessed EDs’ pediatric capabilities according to the latest national guidelines. The results were published in JAMA Network Open in July 2023.

About Responding EDs

3,647 EDs responded of 5,150 surveyed. 3,567 were used for analysis.

81% treat fewer than 10 children each day.

98% are not within a pediatric-specific hospital (i.e., they see adults and children).

MEDIAN SCORE: 69.5 OUT OF 100

Improved Pediatric Readiness

Scores improved in five of six domains since the last assessment in 2013.4

Examples of improvements include:

- 97% of recommended pediatric equipment is present in EDs on average. (up from 89%)
- 75% of EDs weigh and record in kilograms to prevent medication errors. (up from 49%)
- 73% of EDs have a pediatric mental health care policy. (up from 44%)
- 67% of EDs have a policy for physicians’ pediatric competency evaluations. (up from 33%)
- 50% of EDs have pediatric quality improvement plans. (up from 45%)

A Key Concern

The presence of pediatric emergency care coordinators (PECCs)—key drivers of readiness—declined, likely due to staffing shortages tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.

29% of EDs have both a physician and nurse PECC. (down from 42%)

How EDs Can Improve Readiness

A score of at least 88 is associated with significantly improved survival.5

Three components of readiness have the largest impact:

1. Designating PECCs — ideally both a physician and a nurse
2. Implementing pediatric-specific quality improvement plans
3. Ensuring staff includes physicians board-certified in emergency medicine or pediatric emergency medicine

Learn about pediatric readiness or access resources at pediatricreadiness.org.

Take the assessment at pedsready.org.

References:
1. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2807059
2. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2800400
3. The program is part of the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau.