



APPROVED
07.17.26

Level III/Level IV Committee

Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 22, 2026

8:30-9:30 A.M.

Zoom

[Meeting Material & Recording](#)

Committee Members Present*	Representing
Nicole Sundholm	AdventHealth Redmond, Trauma Program Manager
Heather Loftus	Wellstar Spalding, Trauma Program Manager
Brooke J. Marsh	Emanuel Medical Center, BSN, RN TPM
Dawn Truett	Atrium Health Floyd Polk Medical Center, TPM
Brett Buehner	Piedmont Augusta, TPM
Jonathan Horsager	Piedmont Augusta, PI Coordinator
Lynn Grant	Fairview Park Hospital, TPD
Jay Connelly	Piedmont Henry Hospital, Dir trauma
Mary Beth Goodwin	John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital, Trauma PI Coordinator
Cianna Pender	John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital, TMD
Kelli Vaughn	John D. Archbold Memorial Hospital, TPM
Gail Thornton	Emanuel Medical Center, Trauma Registrar/PI/IP
Damien Scott	Emanuel Medical Center, CEO
Courtney Terwilliger	Georgia Trauma Commission, Member
Christi Griner	Colquitt Regional Medical Center, Stroke/trauma coordinator
Karen Barrett	Piedmont Cartersville Medical Center, TPM
Rachel Hand	Wellstar West Ga, Trauma Program Manager
Judean Guinn	Hamilton Medical Center, VP/CNO
Adam Bedgood	Morgan Medical Center, COO
James Polston	Piedmont Walton, TPM
Stevanie Reynolds	Piedmont Walton, Cno
Toni Riddle	Colquitt Regional Medical Center, CNO
Derek Rozier	Liberty Regional Medical Center, CEO
Olalekan Akinyokunbo	Emanuel Medical Center, MD- TMD
Paula Butts	Piedmont Henry Hospital, CNO
Christie Mathis	Morgan Medical Center, TPM
Austin Thomas	Wellstar Cobb Medical Center, Trauma PI Coordinator

***Attendance is pulled from the committee meeting QR code.**



STAFF MEMBERS & OTHERS SIGNING IN	REPRESENTING
Elizabeth Atkins Gabriela Saye Gina Soloman Crystal Shelnutt Nita Ham	Georgia Trauma Commission, Executive Director Georgia Trauma Commission, Business Operations Manager Georgia Trauma Commission, GQIP Director Georgia Trauma Commission, System Planner State Office of Rural Health, Executive Director

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Cienna Pender called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. Memorial Satilla and Colquitt Regional were recognized as newly accredited Level IV trauma centers.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Presented by Dr. Pender

The January 16 meeting minutes were presented for approval.

MOTION LIII/IV Committee 2026-05-01:

Motion to approve the January 16, 2026, meeting minutes as submitted.

MOTION BY: Damian Scott

SECOND BY: Shelby Lemon

VOTING: All members are in favor of the motion.

ACTION: The motion **PASSED** with no objections or abstentions.

GEORGIA TRAUMA COMMISSION UPDATE

Presented by Liz Atkins

Liz Atkins provided an update following the previous day's Georgia Trauma Commission meeting. She clarified that the proposed legislation mandating Stop the Bleed education for high school students ultimately did not pass during the current legislative session, although strong support was demonstrated and future action is anticipated. Current Stop the Bleed programs remain unchanged.

Liz provided an update on the QCentrix Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) project. Several centers experienced delays due to IT connectivity issues. Morgan and Effingham had completed their funded twelve-month participation period, and contract non-renewals had been processed. Centers experiencing delayed implementation will still receive their full twelve months of funded participation.

Members discussed the educational value of IRR and the importance of maintaining data quality despite staff turnover. Potential future solutions included collaboration with Level I and II trauma centers to provide registry support and shared IRR resources. Kelli Vaughn agreed to bring the issue before the Registry Subcommittee for additional discussion.



Rachel Hand reported that Wellstar facilities were only recently gaining traction with implementation and sought clarification regarding the continuation of participation. Liz confirmed that all participating centers would still receive their full funded review period and encouraged continued engagement with the project. Additional discussion addressed contract auto-renewal provisions and the importance of monitoring cancellation deadlines.

RURAL INTERACTIVE TRAUMA SIMULATION COURSE UPDATE

Presented by Courtney Terwilliger

Courtney Terwilliger provided an update on Dr. Mables' Rural Interactive Trauma Simulation Course. Funding previously allocated through the MARCH PAWS project has largely been redirected to support this educational initiative, and the Commission recently approved an additional \$102,000 to continue the program.

Members reported positive experiences with the course and strong multidisciplinary participation. Liz said additional courses are scheduled through the fall and that a total of 10 courses and 173 participants have been reached. Survey feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Kelli Vaughn noted that the course addresses educational priorities previously identified by Level III and IV trauma centers, particularly in initial assessment and resuscitation. RTAC coordinators continue to assist with site selection and the dissemination of course information throughout the state.

ACTION PLANNING REVIEW OF LEVEL III/IV SURVEY PRIORITIES

Presented by Kelli Vaughn

Kelli Vaughn reviewed findings from the Level III and IV trauma center survey and discussed priorities identified by respondents. Top priorities included:

- Standardization of trauma care practices.
- Improving patient transfer processes.
- Development and implementation of trauma-specific protocols.
- Staff education.
- Financial stability of trauma programs.

Members agreed these priorities continue to represent current challenges and should guide committee activities moving forward.

Documentation, Coding, & Financial Sustainability Discussion

Discussion focused on documentation practices, trauma activation coding, and opportunities to improve financial sustainability.



Dr. Alicia Register shared that documentation and coding concerns were closely tied to billing optimization and financial stability. Members discussed the need for education regarding coding practices and charge capture.

Liz Atkins reviewed previous work examining trauma activation charge capture and explained the importance of proper use of trauma activation codes. She noted that additional educational efforts may be beneficial and described resources available through the Trauma Center Association of America (TCAA), including financial consultation and access to the Finance and Operations Manual.

Members discussed the possibility of future educational sessions involving TCAA experts, including Val Rinkle, and expressed interest in additional work regarding Level IV activation charges.

Dr. Register shared positive experiences with TCAA financial consultations and emphasized the value of periodic follow-up education.

Trauma Center Association of America (TCAA) Membership Discussion

Members discussed opportunities to strengthen operational, financial, and administrative support for Level III and IV trauma centers. Several participants noted that many of the challenges facing rural trauma centers extend beyond clinical care and include trauma program finances, coding and billing, readiness cost recovery, trauma activation charge capture, registry support, and program administration.

Liz Atkins reviewed resources currently available through the Trauma Center Association of America (TCAA), including the Finance and Operations Manual, educational webinars, trauma finance training, and access to one-on-one consultations with subject matter experts. Members discussed the value of these resources for centers that may not have dedicated finance or trauma administration personnel and noted that many Level III and IV centers continue to face challenges related to documentation, coding, and maximizing appropriate reimbursement for trauma services.

Committee members also discussed previous trauma finance educational sessions supported by the Georgia Trauma Commission and the positive feedback received from participants. Several members expressed interest in continued education and consultation opportunities, particularly regarding trauma activation charges, readiness costs, trauma center designation-related billing considerations, and financial sustainability in rural hospitals.

Liz noted that the Georgia Trauma Commission had previously funded TCAA memberships for Level III and IV centers and discussed the potential benefits of re-establishing that support. Members agreed that providing statewide access to TCAA resources would create consistency across trauma centers and provide valuable tools for both established and newly designated programs.

Following the discussion, the committee considered a recommendation to support TCAA memberships for all Level III and IV trauma centers.



MOTION LIII/IV Committee 2026-05-02:

Motion to recommend funding one year of Trauma Center Association of America (TCAA) memberships for all Level III and IV trauma centers for the calendar year 2027.

MOTION BY: Shelby Lemon

SECOND BY: Damian Scott

VOTING: All members are in favor of the motion.

ACTION: The motion **PASSED** with no objections or abstentions.

TRAUMA CONNECTIONS GROUP UPDATE

Presented by Rachel Hand

Rachel provided an update from the Trauma Connections Group. Recent discussions focused primarily on concerns about the QCentrix project and the increased use of performance improvement (PI) modules within trauma registry systems.

Members noted that although many centers have access to PI modules, uncertainty remains about the effective use and documentation of loop-closure activities. Rachel Hand and Christy Mathis plan to collaborate with the PI Committee to provide additional education.

Gina Solomon reported that Sarah and Pam are developing educational materials, including recorded presentations and screenshots, to assist centers with the use of the outcomes module. Members also discussed incorporating concepts presented during recent TOPIC courses into future PI education. Concerns regarding the inconsistent interpretation of PI expectations during state designation visits were also discussed.

Transfer Delays and Trauma System Flow

Gina provided an overview of current efforts to evaluate trauma transfer delays and time-to-care intervals. She described previous work by Dr. Ashley and Dr. Dunn, as well as the ongoing statewide analysis by Dr. Rita Anderson using GQIP data. ArborMetrix dashboards are being used to monitor transfer intervals and evaluate trends.

Members discussed barriers contributing to delays, including:

- EMS transport availability.
- Air medical resources.
- Receiving facility acceptance.
- Difficulty obtaining pre-transfer EMS data.
- Lack of clarity regarding which patients require immediate transfer.



Kelli Vaughn noted that transfer processes and documentation are expected to remain a major focus of committee efforts. Members discussed the need to develop practical transfer approaches that are both clinically appropriate and acceptable during ACS verification activities.

Trauma Funding and Readiness Costs

Discussion turned to trauma center funding and readiness costs. Questions were raised regarding uncompensated care funding and ongoing financial challenges faced by Level III and IV centers.

Liz Atkins reported that Dr. Ashley plans to appoint a workgroup to review trauma funding formulas and readiness costs following completion of the current budget cycle. She noted that Level IV centers currently receive a significantly greater percentage of readiness cost reimbursement than Level I through III centers due to lower overall costs. Future readiness surveys and funding reviews will continue as standards evolve.

Members emphasized the importance of ensuring that trauma patients treated in rural facilities receive equitable support and resources.

Registry Vendor Discussion

During open discussion, members briefly addressed the development of the new ESO registry platform. Dr. Pender noted that the Registry Subcommittee is preparing to evaluate vendor demonstrations and gather user feedback. Rachel Hand indicated that Douglas Hospital has already begun using the ESO patient registry product and suggested that interested centers contact Adeline Rath for additional information.

ADJOURNMENT

Members were reminded to complete meeting attendance documentation. Dr. Pender thanked participants for their engagement and encouraged members to reach out with questions or concerns before the next meeting. Members also looked forward to reconnecting at the upcoming Jekyll Island meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 AM.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by Crystal Shelnett