



## Department of Health

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.**  
Commissioner

**SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.**  
Executive Deputy Commissioner

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Dear Hospital Administrator,

On behalf of the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), I would like to express our gratitude for your continued commitment to improving stroke services in New York State (NYS). The current NYSDOH stroke designation program has been a huge success thanks to dedicated hospitals such as yours. Our data shows that the mortality rate (risk-adjusted, 30-day, all causes) for stroke patients is lower in Primary Stroke Centers versus non-designated hospitals, and over ninety percent of strokes were treated at NYS Stroke-Designated Hospitals. NYS stroke mortality is now the second lowest in the nation. This is very encouraging for the future of stroke care and we truly appreciate your contributions to this progress.

### **What is changing:**

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of upcoming changes to the Stroke Services program in NYS. As you know, stroke care guidelines and clinical evidence around treatment of stroke patients has evolved since the inception of our stroke designation program. To acknowledge these advances in stroke treatment, NYSDOH

has proposed regulations to ensure access to quality, evidence-based stroke care for all patients across all levels of stroke center designation, to establish a framework to support regional operationalization of transport processes for suspected stroke, and to continue full reporting of data for evaluation and monitoring of systems of stroke care. In order to accomplish these goals, section 405.34 has been added to Title 10 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of NYS. This regulation creates a tiered voluntary stroke designation program and stroke system of care for hospitals in NYS. The existing stroke designation program will be phased out beginning with the adoption of this regulation. The effective date of the stroke services regulation is March 20, 2019.

**What you need to know:**

Under this regulation, the Department will enter into agreements with approved accrediting organizations, referred to as certifying organizations, that will certify that hospitals meet certain criteria to provide advanced stroke care at Primary, Thrombectomy-Capable and Comprehensive Stroke Centers. Participation in this program is voluntary for hospitals.

The Department has developed criteria for each type of stroke center based on requirements related to the Guidelines of the Brain Attack Coalition and recommendations of the New York State Stroke Advisory Group, the American Heart Association and the American Stroke Association. After being certified as a stroke center at one of the levels, hospitals will request designation from the Department.

Hospitals with current Primary Stroke Center designation from the Department will have a transition period consisting of two years to enter into a contractual agreement with a certifying organization. After entering into a contractual agreement with an approved certifying organization, hospitals will have one year to complete the certification process with that organization. Existing stroke centers that have not entered into a contractual agreement with an approved certifying organization within two years of the effective date of the regulations will lose designation as a NYS stroke center.

**Ongoing requirements of the new program:**

Once approved, designated hospitals will be required to communicate and collaborate with one another to provide appropriate access to care for stroke patients through a coordination agreement. Designated hospitals will also work with EMS providers at the regional and state level to establish regional and state stroke center destination protocols. Designated hospitals will collect and give the Department access to data to determine hospital and system of care performance. Finally, all designated hospitals will be expected to participate in quality improvement activities on an ongoing basis.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to providing the highest level of stroke care to patients in NYS. Additional information on the Stroke Services program, including standards for each of level of stroke care and the approved certifying

organizations may be found on the NYSDOH webpage. For additional questions please contact the Office of Quality and Patient Safety, at [OQPS-OMD@health.ny.gov](mailto:OQPS-OMD@health.ny.gov).

Sincerely,

Marcus Friedrich, M.D., MBA, FACP  
Chief Medical Officer  
Office of Quality and Patient Safety