

Establishing Statutory Safety and Quality Standards for Pediatric Cardiac Surgical Programs

Overview: Activity details the development in Florida of safety and quality standards for hospitals desiring to perform cardiac surgery on children and adults with congenital heart disease.

In the last three years there have been at least four headline stories in major news media about poor surgical outcomes on children with congenital heart disease. Two occurred in Florida and one each recently in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Through legislative advocacy, a group of pediatric cardiologists in Florida worked to create an advisory taskforce with representatives from the ten hospitals currently providing cardiac surgical services in our state to children within the Agency for Health Care Administration; this Agency is the only one which has legislative authority to license hospitals to perform specialized services.

This effort has required three years of writing and lobbying for legislation to establish program design and infrastructure, using medical evidenced based best practice scenarios and periodic on-site visit monitoring of compliance with state law. Biannual surgical outcomes data is collected using the Society of Thoracic Surgeons database, a nationally accepted statistically vetted database with participation of >95% of pediatric cardiac surgical programs in the US and Canada. Results are posted on a public website with lay friendly classification to make this data as transparent as possible and allow parents to make informed decisions when seeking cardiac surgical care for their child.

- **Bill Blanchard**
- bcblanchard@cox.net