

## NEWS RELEASE

### **Children's Hospital of Wisconsin verified as a Level I Children's Surgery Center**

**MILWAUKEE** (5/15/16) – Children's Hospital of Wisconsin has been verified as a Level I Children's Surgery Center by the American College of Surgeons. This is the highest level of distinction for hospitals that perform surgeries – ranging from standard procedures to the most complex – in newborns, children and teens.

Research shows there are fewer complications, better survival and shorter hospital stays when children undergo surgery in hospitals with expert resources for pediatric patients. The American College of Surgeons Children's Surgery Verification Quality Improvement Program provides the nation's first and only multispecialty standards for children's surgical care. It will help families compare the services of hospitals that perform children's surgeries.

Children's Hospital was one of six centers nationwide that agreed to be part of the [verification process](#) pilot, which included an on-site review by experts from across the country. The Level I status achieved by Children's Hospital and the hospital's Surgicenter requires:

- 24/7 staffing by pediatric specialists, including surgeons, anesthesiologists, diagnostic and interventional radiologists, emergency medicine physicians and critical care specialists.
- A Level IV neonatal intensive care unit, the highest level of critical care available for newborns.
- A transport service.
- Research and data collection for benchmarking outcomes.

"Millions of children in the United States undergo surgery every year, but many are having procedures done in hospitals that are not focused on kids or equipped to give them specialized care," said Marc Gorelick, MD, chief operating officer at Children's Hospital and professor of Pediatrics (Emergency Medicine) at the Medical College of Wisconsin. "At Children's we have a talented and experienced team available around the clock to support the needs of infants, children and teens. Our team includes physicians, nurses and other staff from the specialty areas critical for Level I Children's Surgery Center verification – Surgical Services, Anesthesia, Trauma, Transport, Emergency Medicine, Critical Care, Neonatology, Laboratory and Imaging."

#### **About Children's Surgery Verification**

The surgery verification process was created over the past four years with the aim of optimizing the delivery of children's surgical care in today's competitive national health care environment.

Children's Hospital's Surgeon-in-Chief, Keith T. Oldham, MD, chaired the American College of Surgeons task force that developed the [new standards](#). Oldham also is professor of Pediatric Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

He says the goal of the verification process is to see that every child in the U.S. receives appropriate care at a hospital that is equipped to support the medical, emotional and social needs of the child and family. "This process is meant to help families make the best decisions for their children and help ensure that complex procedures are being done at hospitals properly equipped and staffed to manage this level of care for children," Oldham said.

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin and five other hospitals volunteered to pilot the verification program. The results were released by the American College of Surgeons on Sunday, May 15. "The focus of the effort was to develop optimal resource standards that result in improved outcomes," said Oldham. "While children's surgical care is often excellent at hospitals across the country, the quality and resulting outcomes can be inconsistent. Families in Wisconsin are fortunate to have access to one of the best children's hospitals in the country."

According to the American College of Surgeons, more than five million infants and children undergo surgery each year, ranging from standardized outpatient procedures like ear tubes to complex heart-defect repairs that take 12 or more hours in an operating room. Surgical outcomes have improved for pediatric cases, but death and complication rates are still higher in children than adults. For infants younger than 1 year old, researchers estimate the risk of cardiac arrest under anesthesia is about five times as high as for adults; for newborns it is about 10 times as high. Yet close to half of pediatric surgeries across the United States take place at adult-focused hospitals.

### **Surgical expertise at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin**

Children's Hospital is Wisconsin's only independent health care system dedicated solely to the health and well-being of children. As one of the leading pediatric hospitals in the country, Children's Hospital has some of the highest surgical volumes for certain procedures and some of the best outcomes.

- In 2015, more than 18,960 surgical procedures were completed by Children's Hospital.
- Those surgeries ranged from nearly 700 heart surgeries to more than 2,000 tonsillectomies.
- Children's Hospital has more than 540 pediatric specialty providers who have devoted their careers to kids.
- Those providers include more than 40 surgeons, 35 anesthesiologists and a multitude of other pediatric specialists, many with sub-specialty training.