

Reference Document: BC Levels of Care – Pediatric Critical Care

Levels of Pediatric Critical Care - patient acuity

The Pediatric Critical Care Levels of Care describe individual patient care needs and should be aligned to the appropriate available service, as close to home as safely possible.

Consideration of a site’s ability to meet the needs of critically ill children as described is essential. If a team is unsure the patient’s needs can be met, referral and support from a pediatric critical care unit is advised.

Protocols and procedures are required to ensure children requiring higher Levels of Care can be transferred promptly to the appropriate centre for their care needs. Thus, there should be an established referral structure between Critical Care units, including mutual escalation and repatriation policies and an established joint review process.

Note: The levels of Pediatric Critical Care reflect the intensity and current clinical status rather than the quality of care.

Levels	Patient Care Descriptions
Level 3	A child requiring Pediatric Critical Care intensive supervision and continuous monitoring at all times, with two or more organ systems needing technological support. This includes advanced invasive respiratory support. A child may undergo complex therapeutic and monitoring procedures, such as invasive and non-invasive ventilation requiring advanced renal support; children who have suffered multiple trauma ¹ ; or children who have undergone complex major surgery or require extracorporeal life support (ECLS).
Level 2	A child requiring continuous supervision may need invasive and non-invasive ventilatory support or support for two or more organ systems, for example, major

¹ Major trauma is defined as an ISS score >12. Thus, some major trauma patients may be cared for in a tertiary (Tier 5) centre.

	trauma. Sometimes, the child will have one organ system needing support and another suffering from chronic failure. Usually, children receiving level 2 care are intubated to assist with breathing. Level 2 patients are at risk of deteriorating and requiring Level 3 support.
Level 1	A child requires closer observation and monitoring than is usually available in an acute children's inpatient unit. For example, the child may need support from one organ system (excluding invasive ventilation), minor trauma, continuous heart rate or invasive blood pressure and respiratory monitoring, advanced analgesic techniques, or hemodynamic support (e.g. vasoactive infusions). Level 1 patients are at an increased risk of deteriorating to a level two or three care need.
Level 0	Level 0 indicates outlier patients who could be cared for in an acute inpatient unit. Typically, these are patients who have recovered from their critical illness (i.e., were previously level 1-3) and are awaiting transfer to a lower level of care. This level is a quality indicator to identify and track patients utilizing Critical Care resources that do not require them.

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References

1. Adapted from: Paediatric Critical Care Society [PCCS]. (2021). Quality standards for the care of critically ill or injured children (6th ed.). Retrieved [from Paediatric Critical Care Society website](#).
2. Pediatric Critical Care in British Columbia: Defining & Describing Care Standards, December 2023. [Available on SHOP](#).

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