

# CASE STUDY: ST. JOSEPH HOSPITAL, NASHUA, NH

Paving the path to first-time ACS verification at a Level III trauma center



## TRAUMA CONSULTING SERVICE: Site Survey Readiness

Founded in 1908, St. Joseph Hospital is part of Covenant Health, a not-for-profit healthcare system in Nashua, New Hampshire. As a Level III trauma center, it includes a 208-bed acute care hospital and several outpatient clinics, employing over 1,400 full-time staff dedicated to high-quality, safe patient care. As a cornerstone of the community, the hospital provides exemplary and comprehensive services to meet the region's healthcare needs.



**BACKGROUND:** St. Joseph Hospital, currently a state designated Level III trauma center, is seeking American College of Surgeons (ACS) verification, a requirement for all Level III trauma centers in New Hampshire by January 1, 2026. The hospital aimed to identify any gaps in achieving ACS verification and address several key issues facing the trauma center:

- A 2022 trauma site survey by the New Hampshire Trauma Medical Review Committee identified several opportunities for improvement. While these issues were resolved, the leadership was committed to preventing similar challenges in the future.
- With a commitment to an ACS verification survey in May 2025, the data year was already underway. The hospital wanted to ensure they were capturing complete and accurate clinical data, correctly abstracted from the registry.
- The program leadership requested a review of the Performance Improvement and Patient Safety Plan (PIPS) to ensure thorough documentation of issue resolution.
- Ensuring they had the right personnel in place to adequately prepare for and support the site survey was a top priority

To prepare, they consulted Optimal Healthcare Advisors to assess gaps in meeting ACS trauma standards, demonstrating their proactive approach to ensuring a successful verification.

**SOLUTION:** To ensure a successful ACS verification, St. Joseph Hospital partnered with Optimal Healthcare Advisors for a comprehensive two-week onsite assessment.

- Key stakeholders were engaged throughout the process, ensuring involvement of each department and discipline supporting the hospital's trauma program.
- A mock survey was conducted with essential hospital departments to familiarize them with the virtual survey process and set expectations.
- ACS standards for Level III trauma centers were thoroughly reviewed through a gap analysis to identify compliance and opportunities for improvement.
- The Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) report was examined to identify critical focus areas for developing action plans.
- Relevant program documents, previous state reviews, and data were reviewed to draw conclusions on where performance gaps existed.
- An experienced trauma medical director was brought in to provide peer support to the new trauma medical director.

**RESULT:** The collaboration produced a detailed report outlining a timeline and recommendations for the next nine months, highlighting the trauma program's strengths and areas for improvement. Emphasizing the importance of hospital-wide support, priorities were set to address key needs. Optimal Healthcare Advisors provided a clear path to ensure a successful verification survey in 2025, giving St. Joseph Hospital the direction needed for optimal preparation and implementation.

“Partnering with Optimal Healthcare Advisors has provided us with the comprehensive guidance and strategic direction needed to ensure our trauma program meets ACS standards. Their expertise has been invaluable in preparing us for a successful verification survey in 2025.”

TRAUMA PROGRAM MANAGER  
St. Joseph Hospital