

CASE STUDY:

KONA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL, KEALAKEKUA, HI

Guiding a successful transition from state designation to ACS Level III verification

**TRAUMA CONSULTING SERVICE:**
Site Survey Readiness

Founded in 1914, Kona Community Hospital is a 94-bed acute care facility and Level III trauma center, home to a 24-hour emergency department serving West Hawaii. Committed to delivering accessible, comprehensive healthcare, the hospital offers a wide range of services provided by a highly trained team. Known for its long-standing tradition of quality care, Kona Community Hospital strives to provide a healing environment for all the people of Hawaii.



BACKGROUND: Kona Community Hospital, a state designated Level III trauma center, was preparing for American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma (ACS COT) verification, a requirement for all Level III centers in Hawaii by their next survey. With its verification scheduled for summer 2025, the hospital sought to address remaining gaps in meeting ACS COT standards and strengthen core trauma program operations. A prior site survey by the State of Hawaii Department of Health had identified several opportunities for improvement, most of which had since been resolved, but leadership remained committed to preventing similar challenges.

To support its verification efforts, Kona Community Hospital partnered with Optimal Healthcare Advisors to assess compliance with ACS COT requirements, guide targeted improvements, and ensure a proactive, well structured path toward successful verification.

SOLUTION: During a one week onsite assessment, Optimal Healthcare Advisors conducted a comprehensive evaluation of trauma program operations and compliance. The review concentrated on key elements essential to ACS COT readiness and overall trauma program performance.

- Focused on performance improvement initiatives ahead of the verification survey, ensuring all guidelines and protocols were compliant.
- Reviewed transfer delays at the request of program leadership, given the challenges of operating on an island with limited transport capabilities.
- Examined whether the Trauma Medical Director (TMD) had the appropriate authority to determine participants on the call panel.
- Engaged key stakeholders across all departments and disciplines supporting the trauma program.
- Conducted a mock survey with key hospital departments to familiarize staff with the virtual survey process and set clear expectations.
- Performed a comprehensive gap analysis of ACS COT standards for Level III trauma centers, identifying compliance levels and areas for improvement.
- Analyzed the Trauma Quality Improvement Program (TQIP) report to pinpoint critical areas for action plan development.
- Reviewed relevant program documents, past state surveys, and data to identify performance gaps.

RESULT: The collaboration produced a comprehensive report outlining clear recommendations, timelines, and priorities to address critical gaps while strengthening existing program assets. The report emphasized the need for hospital wide engagement and provided Kona Community Hospital with a structured roadmap toward successful ACS COT verification.

In the time leading up to the survey, Optimal Healthcare Advisors maintained regular check ins with hospital leadership and key committees, offering ongoing review of committee minutes, progress updates, and guidance to ensure the hospital remained on track. In summer 2025, Kona Community Hospital successfully completed its ACS survey and earned a one-year Level III trauma center verification.

Optimal Healthcare Advisors continued to support the hospital throughout the following year. In summer 2026, Kona Community Hospital achieved a full three year verification, meeting all ACS COT standards.

This milestone reflects the hospital's commitment to excellence, its resilience in overcoming geographic and resource related challenges, and its vital role as a trusted provider of trauma care for West Hawaii.

“Optimal Healthcare Advisors provided invaluable support in preparing Kona Community Hospital's trauma program for our verification survey. Their assessments identified gaps and opportunities, helping ensure we were well prepared. Thanks to their ongoing guidance, we successfully earned Level III Trauma Center Verification by the American College of Surgeons, a milestone we are very proud of.”

DENISE WIEGAND, RN
Interim Trauma Program Manager, Kona Community Hospital