Children can present to the emergency department at any time. In most emergency departments, however, children make up only about 20% (sometimes a little more, sometimes a little less) of the total number of patient visits annually. For that reason, ED staff may not always feel comfortable or confident that they can care for the unique needs of a child of any age, from infancy through the teen age years.

It is important that ED leadership consider the training and competency of ALL staff that may come into contact with a child during an ED encounter. Some things to consider are:

* Age-appropriate interactions and interventions with all ages of children
* What assures that a physician is ‘competent’ to care for children in the ED?
* What assures that a nurse is ‘competent’ to care for children in the ED?
* Does your ED conduct baseline and periodic evaluations for all ED clinical staff, including physicians, nurses and mid-level practitioners to include pediatric competency?
* Are physicians required to perform a minimum number of pediatric sedations to maintain competency?
* Are staff required to take part in periodic chart reviews of pediatric patients to assure consistency with evidence-based practice?
* Do ancillary staff (RT, lab, x-ray, etc) have the necessary skills and comfort level to care for children?
* Are all staff trained to provide services to children consistent with the services offered by the hospital overall?

In this folder, you’ll find a document used by one hospital system (HCA) to outline both the educational and competency requirements necessary for staff caring for children in the ED. This document is a *guideline* for you to reference. It may be used as reference material in the development of your own policy for your staff, or it may be incorporated into your policy as you feel is appropriate. In addition, you’ll find documents showing one hospital system’s (Harbor-UCLA Medical Center) criteria for baseline nursing competency, as well as an example schedule of an annual competency for that same system.

If your hospital or hospital system uses different criteria to measure competency, be sure to clearly to articulate that in your facility policy.