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**NORTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM'S NEW BLOOD TRANSFUSION  
PROGRAM SAVING LIVES BEFORE PATIENTS REACH THE HOSPITAL**

WINDER, Ga. – When something traumatic happens and a person is losing blood, getting care quickly can mean the difference between life and death. That's why Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) recently started a new blood transfusion program in Barrow County, ensuring patients can receive life-saving treatment before they even arrive at the hospital.

NGHS, which began operating Barrow County's ambulance and emergency medical services in 2021, has equipped first responders with the ability to administer blood transfusions in the field – giving patients a greater chance of survival.

“Blood transfusions can be crucial in stabilizing patients who suffer from significant blood loss due to trauma, medical emergencies or other life-threatening conditions,” said Walter Wiley, executive director for Emergency, Trauma, Observation and EMS Services at NGHS. “By providing this service before patients reach the hospital, NGHS continues to set the standard for emergency care in the state.”

Of the more than 11,000 EMS agencies in the U.S. that provide traditional ambulance service to take patients to acute care hospitals, only about 1% carry blood. NGHS helped implement similar blood transfusion service on ambulances in Dawson, Habersham, Jackson, and White counties in 2020.

“Being able to provide blood transfusions before patients get to the hospital is a game changer for emergency care,” said Erick Giraldo, director for Emergency Medical Services at

NGHS. “Our EMS team in Barrow County provided blood to a patient in an ambulance for the first time last week, while on the way to Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville, and the patient’s blood pressure was dramatically improved by the time they arrived at the hospital.”

The blood transfusion service is just the latest in a string of improvements NGHS has made to emergency services in Barrow County in the past few months. In January, more than 40 community leaders gathered at Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) Barrow to cut the ribbon for its newly renovated emergency department waiting area. Then in February, NGMC Barrow became one of the first three hospitals in Georgia to have its emergency department designated by the state for pediatric care.

“This means we are capable of the initial evaluation and stabilization of critically ill children and can provide appropriate, timely transfer to a higher level of care if needed,” said Akhil Saraswat, MD, medical director of NGMC Barrow’s emergency department. “Simply put, if you live in the area and your child needs emergency care, seconds count – don’t drive straight to Atlanta. Bring them to NGMC Barrow where we can provide immediate treatment and fast-track them to our partners in Gainesville or Atlanta if needed.”

NGMC Barrow’s emergency department has also earned the prestigious Lantern Award for excellence in emergency care from the national Emergency Nurses Association and is accredited for pain and addiction care by the American College of Emergency Physicians.

For more information about emergency care at NGHS, visit [nghs.com/emergency](https://nghs.com/emergency).

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## **ABOUT NORTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM**

Northeast Georgia Health System (NGHS) is a non-profit on a mission of improving the health of our community in all we do. Our team cares for more than 1 million people across the region through five hospitals and a variety of outpatient locations. Northeast Georgia Medical Center (NGMC) has campuses in Gainesville, Braselton, Winder, Dahlonega and Demorest – with a

total of more than 1,000 beds and more than 1,500 medical staff members representing more than 60 specialties. Learn more at [www.nghs.com](http://www.nghs.com).