

BROADCAST-OSF launches new hotline in Galesburg

OSF HealthCare is not only dealing with a COVID-19 surge that is nearing, or surpassing, all previous surges of hospitalization, but in the western Illinois community of Galesburg, there's a perfect storm of sorts.

A neighboring hospital of OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center's recently and abruptly closed after facing numerous challenges. Those include safety violations which led the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare to de-certify Cottage Hospital. Lisa DeKezel (duh-KEYS-uhl), president of OSF HealthCare St. Mary Medical Center in Galesburg and Holy Family Medical Center in nearby Monmouth says a new hotline will help patients of Cottage Hospital transfer their care.

“We are getting a lot of inquiries from former Cottage Hospital patients, asking ‘How do I transfer my care? How do I transfer my records?’ Please know that we are here to serve you.” (:09)

The hotline will be staffed from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, Outside of those hours, callers can leave a message to receive a call back. **The hotline number is 309-344-9438.**

DeKezel says OSF leaders saw discontinuation of services and providers and so they've been preparing for more than two years to be the sole health care provider in the region.

“We've recently renovated our entire, second floor surgery department. We're adding additional ICU beds here at St. Mary Medical Center in Galesburg. We also expanded our obstetrics unit a few years ago as we prepared to be the sole obstetrics provider in the region. And we're doing a 10,000-squar-foot ED (emergency department) renovation at Holy Family Medical Center in Monmouth to expand those capabilities as well.” (:24)

OSF has been able to manage the increased volume of patients because it hasn't happened overnight. For as far back as eight months ago, OSF St. Mary and Holy Family Medical Centers have been seeing more patients for emergency care, surgery and procedures, as well as for COVID-19 and other care requiring intensive care.

Dr. Brandon Briggs who heads up the emergency department at both hospitals says they're managing but he says the COVID-19 surge is compounding problems. He encourages the public to help by wearing well-fitted masks in public, washing hands, and thinking carefully about being in larger crowds.

“It's making it more difficult to get patients where they need to be because of the pandemic, and the bed crisis and the lack of availability. So, that leads into the precautions about COVID taking it more seriously so that we do have those beds for patients that truly need them.” (:18)

He also encourages people to think about where they're going to be treated.

“We don't want to deter any patients from coming to the ER if they feel like they're having a true medical emergency. We do ask that they have patience if they do come to the emergency room. If they do think their condition could be treated in an outpatient facility (primary-specialty care offices or walk-in clinic), we do ask that you try to do that.” (:18)

OSF HealthCare is continuing to hire new Mission Partners (employees) to meet demand, with many but not all former Cottage Hospital doctors, nurses and support staff joining the OSF team.

