

January 27, 2020

Via Email and FedEx

Sherman Lohnes, Esq.
Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification
Department of Public Health
67 Forest Street
Marlborough, MA 01752



Re: Lowell General Hospital – Saints Campus – Temporary Closure of ICU & Temporary Closure of Operating Rooms

Dear Attorney Lohnes:

This letter is submitted on behalf of The Lowell General Hospital, which operates a licensed hospital with two (2) campuses, consisting of a main campus at 295 Varnum Avenue, Lowell, MA 01854, which is known as “Lowell General Hospital,” and a second campus three miles away known as “Lowell General Hospital – Saints Campus” at One Hospital Drive, Lowell, MA, 01852 (collectively, the “Hospital”). The Hospital hereby provides ninety (90) day notice to the Department of Public Health (“Department”) of its decision to temporarily discontinue its operation of 17 Intensive Care Unit (“ICU”) beds at its Saints Campus and to temporarily discontinue all mixed use Operating Rooms (“ORs”) at Saints Campus, collectively the “Services.”

The Hospital determined that the Services should be temporarily discontinued because of underutilization, the availability of such services at other nearby locations, and the Hospital’s need to analyze its health care offerings to the patient community.

As set forth in its December 27, 2019 notice of intent letter, the Hospital anticipates that the ICU beds would be discontinued during the time that the Hospital re-evaluates its bed utilization and capacity needs and then be reactivated at a later date. This temporary closure would preserve the Hospital’s right to operate the ICU beds in the future pursuant to 105 CMR 130.122(A) without Determination of Need Review or approval. Similarly, the Hospital is temporarily closing the ORs at Saints Campus while it re-evaluates surgery needs at the site, with the intention of later reactivating the ORs.

Accordingly, in compliance with applicable requirements at 105 CMR 130.122, the Hospital provides this written notice of the planned temporary discontinuance of the above described services. The following information is hereby provided for your review:

1. Current Utilization Rates. The following represents the ICU and OR patient volume of the Services at the Hospital’s Saints Campus for the last three (3) years, plus year-to-date (YTD, January 2020). Both of the Services have experienced low volume with underutilized capacity.

Intensive Care Unit – Patient Days

FY2017 = 1491 (112 discharges)
FY2018 = 1572 (85 discharges)
FY2019 = 1154 (88 discharges)
FY2020 (YTD) = 0

Since 2017 and 2018, the number of ICU discharges dropped precipitously between 20% – 24% from an already low volume of only 112 discharges. In the last year, use of the Saints Campus ICU was only 29% of its capacity. Patient-per-day volume shows significant underutilization of the unit, as well. In the last year, the ICU treated between 2.4 to 3.7 patients per day, though the unit is licensed for 17 beds and has had 10 beds in normal operation. This represents only a 24% to 37% utilization rate. Even at its highest rate of 37%, this low level of utilization demonstrates that patients do not choose ICU services at Saints Campus at a rate that makes the ICU effective at meeting patient needs.

Operating Room – Volume (Individual OR cases)

FY2017 = 1574
FY2018 = 1639
FY2019 = 1689
FY2020 (YTD) = 0

Saints Campus has had two (2) ORs staffed per day over the last three (3) years. Year-to-year, total volume has not changed significantly, and has been within 3% to 4% of the prior year's volume. Importantly, of total capacity at Saints Campus, utilization of the ORs was only 35% based on individual OR case data. Like the ICU, this data shows that patient demand for OR services at Saints Campus has been low over the past several years. Accordingly, at present the Saints Campus ORs do not align with patient demand for surgical services.

2. Impact of Discontinuance. The Hospital is not expecting the temporary closure of the Services to have an impact on the patient community. Any impact would be minimal, since patient access would be unaffected. Saints Campus is part of the overall Lowell General Hospital organization. The Lowell General main campus is within the same service area as Saints Campus, is only three (3) miles, or ten (10) minutes, away and offers ICU and OR care in numbers sufficient to meet patient demand. There are 23 ICU beds and 13 ORs at the main campus. With only 55% of total Hospital ICU beds used and only 12% of total Hospital ORs



used over the last year, the main campus has excess ICU and OR capacity to make up for the temporary closure of these Services at Saints Campus.

Furthermore, the Lowell General main campus and the Saints Campus share the same medical staff, administrative leadership, and governing board. Likewise, they are operated under one Department license and use consistent protocols for health care operations. In practice, patients presenting to the Saints Campus for ICU care and/or OR services have been regularly transferred to the Lowell General main campus since 2012 in order to ensure that patients' health care needs for subspecialties that the Saints Campus does not offer are met. The Hospital has a longstanding, well-established process to provide Advanced Life Support and Critical Care ambulance transfers from the Saints Campus to the Lowell General main campus. For OR care, there also is outpatient surgery performed at the Lowell Surgery Center at Drum Hill, which is within the service area, as well.

3. Date Set of Discontinuation. Ninety (90) day notice is hereby given for a target closure date of Sunday, April 26, 2020.
4. Health Care Coalitions and Community Groups. The Hospital anticipates that the following groups may have an interest in the discontinuation of the Services:
 - Greater Lowell Health Alliance (CHNA10) 55 Technology Dr. Lowell, MA 01851
 - Lowell Community Health Center – 161 Jackson Street, Lowell, MA 01854
 - Lowell Health Department – 341 Pine Street, Lowell, MA 01851
 - Trinity EMS – 1221 Westford Street, Lowell, MA 01853
 - Pridestar EMS – 229 Stedman Street, Lowell, MA 01851
 - Circle Home – 847 Rogers Street, Suite 201, Lowell, MA 01852
 - D'Youville Life & Wellness Community - 981 Varnum Avenue, Lowell, MA 01854
5. Community Engagement and Planning Activities Prior to the Notice of Closure. The Hospital has undertaken the following community engagement and planning activities:

The Hospital has had verbal communication about the changes at Saints Campus, either directly or through a Hospital or Circle Health board meeting, with the health care coalitions and community groups identified above.

In addition, the Hospital notified and/or discussed the temporary closures with other individuals and groups, as follows:

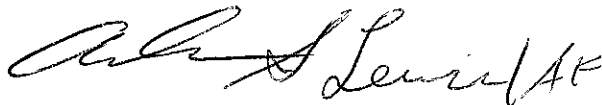
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- LGH Patient Family Advisory Council – Wednesday, November 20, 2019
- Hon. Eileen Donoghue, City Manager, City of Lowell, Massachusetts – Monday, December 2, 2019
- Hon. Edward J. Kennedy, then Councilor, City Council, City of Lowell, Massachusetts and Senator, Massachusetts Senate – Monday, December 2, 2019
- Hon. David Nangle, Massachusetts House of Representatives – Monday, December 9, 2019
- Hon. Thomas Golden, Massachusetts House of Representatives – Monday, December 9, 2019
- Lowell Sun Editorial Review Board – Tuesday, December 10, 2019
- William Samaras, Councilor, City of Lowell – January 24, 2020
- Hon. Rady Mom, Massachusetts House of Representatives – January 24, 2020

We thank you for your attention to this matter. If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Andrew S. Levine

cc: K. Haynes, Esq., DPH
W. Mackie, DPH
A. Nardone, DPH
Z. Redmond, LGH
R. Rodman, Esq., DPH

Health Policy Commission
Office of the Attorney General (Massachusetts)
Center for Health Information and Analysis
Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Greater Lowell Health Alliance (CHNA10)
Lowell Community Health Center
Lowell Health Department
Trinity EMS
Pridestar EMS
Circle Home
D'Youville Life & Wellness Community