

# HUSCH BLACKWELL

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July 5, 2023

## Via Email

Stephen Davis, Division Director  
Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
67 Forest Street  
Marlborough, MA 01752

Re: Response to the Department's Comments on Hospital's Access to Services Plan dated June 26, 2023

Dear Mr. Davis:

We write on behalf of Morton Hospital, A Steward Family Hospital Inc. ("Hospital") in response to the Department of Public Health's (the "Department") comments on the Hospital's plan for access to services following the closure of the Morton Hospital Comprehensive Addiction Program ("MORCAP"). The Hospital's plan provided data on utilization of MORCAP services, the projected impacts on alternative sites, support of patients in accessing alternative site healthcare, and the efforts by the Hospital with respect to equity and inclusion and community engagement activities. In compliance with the regulatory requirements at 105 CMR 130.122(G), the Hospital offers the following response to the Department's comments on the access to services plan.

- 1. Transportation: In your response dated June 15, 2023, you noted the towns in Morton Hospital's service area represent 32.5% of MORCAP's total discharges; however information was not provided on how the Hospital will assure ongoing access to the service, as required by MGL c. 111, s. 51G(4) and 105 CMR 130.122. The Department requests information on how the Hospital intends to facilitate transportation for patients in need of substance use disorder services out of Morton Hospital's service area to Carney Hospital Comprehensive Addiction Program (CARCAP) or another facility.**

The Hospital appreciate the concerns raised by the public and the Department's inquiry on accessing substance use disorder services when the MORCAP services essentially transfer to Carney Hospital. As mentioned in the Hospital's access plan response, it is the Hospital's plan that MORCAP will remain open until the SUD services at Carney are operational. At that time, all

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then-current patients will be permitted to remain at Morton Hospital and receive MORCAP services until they complete their course of treatment.

With respect to the Hospital's plan for facilitating access to the services, the Hospital will offer guidance on the various public transit routes to Carney Hospital and other alternative site services.

The Hospital wishes to emphasize the context in which patients are admitted to MORCAP. MORCAP patients are not primarily admitted or transferred from emergency departments or other acute care facilities, instead patients present to MORCAP via personal and public transportation. If a patient presents to an Emergency Department ("ED"), they are typically discharged from the ED and provided with resources to seek inpatient treatment, one which is currently MORCAP. The patient then voluntarily meets with the MORCAP intake team, to review their case and determine if they meet the criteria. The Hospital recognizes that approximately 1/3 of its patients will need to travel further for services. To that end, the Hospital's strategy of a "slow" closure of MORCAP will provide sufficient time and awareness to the community to prepare for the transition of SUD services to alternative sites. The Hospital will work to provide continued and sustained guidance after MORCAP's closure to the public for access to public transportation to the alternative sites. As indicated, there is public transportation available from Taunton to Boston. The Hospital has provided the bus routes and commuter rail timelines, attached to this response, which will be provided to patients who want to seek out SUD services. These routes provide the departure and arrival times into and out of Boston and include the various stops along the way which include:

- Middleborough/Lakeville – commuter rail to south station - red line to Cedar Grove (0.26 miles to Carney Hospital)
- Raynham/Taunton – Taunton GATRA bus - Bloom Bus Terminal – bus to Park Square (bus runs every 45 minutes) – Redline to Ashmont (0.5 miles to Carney Hospital) or Cedar Grove (0.26 miles to Carney Hospital)
- Foxboro/Mansfield – Commuter rail (Providence/Stoughton line) Mansfield to Ruggles – bus to Ashmont (0.5 miles to Carney Hospital)
- Bridgewater – commuter rail to south station (Burrill Ave, Bridgewater, MA 02324) - red line to Cedar Grove (0.26 miles from Carney Hospital)

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority ("MBTA") and Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority ("GATRA") Schedules are attached (Exhibit 1).

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- 2. Equity and Inclusion: In your response dated June 15, 2023, you stated the individualized plan of care post-discharge takes into account the needs of marginalized patients including MassHealth patients. The Department requests a detailed breakdown of the specific needs which have been identified by the Hospital and how they will be addressed in discharge planning, as well as information on the Hospital's plan to address concerns regarding the MORCAP closure's disproportionate effect on marginalized communities.**

The Hospital collects Health Related Social Needs data used to identify patients with immediate daily needs that arise from the inequities caused by the social determinants of health, such as a lack of access to basic resources like stable housing, an environment free of life-threatening toxins, healthy food, utilities including heating and internet access, transportation, physical and mental health care, safety from violence, education and employment, and social connection. This data is collected from the patient's family for all inpatient admissions. These collections are part of the Hospital's Nursing and Care Management Assessments and recorded in the Hospital's Electronic Health Record, which will trigger certain responses.

Depending on patient responses to these questions, certain answers will trigger Hospital staff to consult with patients to discuss their needs and identify ways to provide the patients with internal or external resources to meet their needs. The Hospital draws on its providers and staff which include nursing, case management, social workers, pharmacy, food and nutrition, spiritual care, rehabilitation staff, and other clinical staff with expertise to meet the patient's needs.

The Hospital is able to help these patients ensure they have proper healthcare coverage from MassHealth, or other alternative health assistance to defray patient costs. The Hospital staff is trained to be aware of programs, clinics, or services that can provide continued care. For example, the Hospital will refer patients who have MassHealth Limited coverage to seek prescriptions from clinics like the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, who can provide these patients with prescriptions covered by their MassHealth Limited plan.

The Hospital works to provide resources for nutrition needs and housing support, where possible. Housing support is very limited based on the costs and challenges associated with providing shelter to individuals. However, the Hospital does provide advocates who can represent patients at the housing court and try to avoid evictions and loss of shelter. The Hospital assists patients coordinating benefits and care from other state agencies including such as Department of Developmental Services or Department of Mental Health. The Hospital also has relationships with groups like Community Partners Program who work with patients suffering from significant behavioral health needs. The Hospital works with a number of other partners who provide community services to meet particular needs, which include the following:

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- Tribal health services – Mashpee Wampanoag Health Services
- Haitian Day Program in Brockton
- Supported Living Program – individualized home support
- Needle exchange at Seven Hills Taunton
- Laundry at Our Daily Bread
- Mass Health at ALF
- Immigration resources

Lastly, the Hospital is committed to providing translator services to support the diverse and marginalized community members.

- 3. Community Engagement: In your response dated June 15, 2023, you stated the Hospital will continue to provide updates on its closure plan to various interested parties and elected officials in monthly community forums. The Department requests additional information on the form and content of these community forums, including how long the forums will continue and the means by which interested parties will be made aware of upcoming forums. Additionally, the Department requests the Hospital confirm that these updates will note for the community the ongoing availability of 18 treatment beds at MORCAP until the 25 beds planned to open at CARCAP are operational.**

The Hospital continues to work diligently to provide updates to various stakeholders and elected officials in monthly community forums. Specifically, the Hospital meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month with the Community Crisis Intervention team. The team includes the following attendees:

- Arbors Assisted Living
- Attleboro Police Department
- Bristol County DA's Office
- Brockton Police Department
- Community Counseling of Bristol County (CCBC, Numerous Departments)
- Chief Probation Office
- Department of Children & Families
- Department of Mental Health
- Fuller Hospital
- Mansfield Police Department
- Morton Hospital

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- Old Colony YMCA
- Raynham Police Department
- Taunton Diversity Network
- Taunton Housing Authority
- Taunton Police Department
- Taunton Public Schools

The Hospital provides information to the stakeholders at these meetings about the continued MORCAP services available until the SUD services at Carney Hospital are open. Additionally, we are providing to each MORCAP patient in their admissions packet a notice of the closure of MORCAP, the continued availability of the service for the patient's current stay, and the projected opening of services at Carney Hospital. (Exhibit 2).

- 4. Staffing: In your response dated June 15, 2023, you stated the required nursing staff for the 18 Level 4.0 beds will be available while MORCAP remains open, “. . . to the extent the census and the nursing staff support such staffing.” Elsewhere in your response (see 2.(a)), you indicated “MORCAP will maintain 18 beds in operation until CARCAP opens with 25 beds.” The Department requests the Hospital confirm it will continue operation of 18 staffed beds at MORCAP until the 25 beds planned to open at CARCAP are operational, in fulfillment of the requirement the plan assure ongoing access to the service.**

As previously indicated, the Hospital continues to have full-time employment (“FTE”) postings for additional nursing staff that remain unfilled. (Exhibit 3). The nursing shortage continues to be an issue for the Hospital with respect to this service, but the Hospital continues to engage in recruiting activities as part of the Hospital's commitment to staff and keep the 18 MORCAP beds open.

We thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact Dominic Castillo, Esq., or me, if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Andrew S. Levine

Enclosures

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cc: E. Kelley, DPH  
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