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Frequently Asked Questions: Health Care Center Closure

1. How long has the Bergen County Health Care Center been operational?

For decades, Bergen County Health Care Center (BCHCC) in Rockleigh has been privileged to provide high-quality, compassionate short and long-term care for the most vulnerable among us who are unable to adequately care for themselves.

2. How many licensed beds are there at BCHCC?

There are 110 licensed beds.

3. How many residents are there at BCHCC?

There are currently 46 residents.

4. Why is the occupancy so low?

Like the rest of the long-term care community, over the last five years, BCHCC has continued to experience a gradual decline in patients. Inadequate reimbursement and the shift toward home or community-based care has created additional stress on long-term care facilities over the years. In addition, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and deadly impact on the long-term care community throughout the entire country. In an abundance of caution, the County has suspended admission of new residents during the pandemic in order to protect residents.

5. Was COVID-19 a factor in the decision to close?

BCHCC suspended new admissions since the start of the pandemic in order to protect the health of an extremely vulnerable long-term care community. The unprecedented COVID-19 crisis also revealed that access to a more centrally located facility that has access to acute care services presents a great benefit to our long-term care community.

6. Why hasn't Bergen County Health Care Center taken in any new residents since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis?

Out of an abundance of caution and in order to protect our residents, BCHCC decided not to accept new admissions since the start of the pandemic.

7. Did something change recently that led to the decision to close?

In addition to the declining census and the significant impact of COVID-19, the County is also seeing new and emerging trends within the long-term care industry.

8. Why didn't the County try to sell Bergen County Health Care Center?

Other operators of long-term care facilities have opted to sell their facilities based on similar challenges to those that Bergen County Health Care Center is facing, which has been reported recently in the news. Bergen County Health Care Center is County owned and operated. The Health Care Center is in a remote location with no direct access to acute care services. The Health Care Center frequently experiences logistical issues with ambulance services and even transporting residents to doctor's appointments. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the urgent need for patients to have access to acute care services. Selling the facility would not alleviate these challenges. Transferring residents within the County network to Bergen New Bridge Medical Center (BNBMC) provides residents and their families with immediate access to high-quality, acute care services that already exist in the area. The County has no immediate or long-term plans to sell the building or property.

9. Can the facility be upgraded to meet current standards?

The more feasible option for the long-term care residents is to transfer them to a County facility where they have access to acute care services. The amount of time that it would take to upgrade the BCHCC facility to meet current standards would severely disrupt resident care and would not be cost-effective.

10. What is the combined impact of these changes?

With a diminishing census, fixed overhead costs and increasing variable costs, COVID-19 related impacts and the opportunity to provide access to a more centrally located facility that has access to acute care services, the County has determined that is in the best interests of the long-term care community and Bergen County residents to close the facility.

11. What are the options for patients?

The County of Bergen is dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition for our residents, who have become part of our extended family over the years. Over the next few months, the County will be working closely with residents and their families to provide information and assistance during this transition. In addition to transferring to another long term care facility, residents have the option to transition to a community-based setting. For any residents who do not make an alternative arrangement of their own, the County will help them transfer to BNBMC's Long-Term Nursing Care program in centrally located Paramus. An acute and long-term care hospital, BNBMC will provide a continuum of care and standards that our residents are accustomed to receiving all in one location.

12. What will happen to patients who do not make an alternate arrangement?

For any residents who do not make an alternative arrangement of their own, the County will be consolidating its in-patient health care services into one facility, BNBMC, and transfer them to BNBMC's Long-Term Nursing Care program in centrally located Paramus. The County will provide this as an option in an effort to make this transition as seamless and convenient as possible.

13. If patients choose to relocate to BNBMC, will it be more expensive for them than BCHCC?

Most patients and families will not incur additional costs if they choose to relocate to BNBMC or another long term care facility. Cost share and PNA amounts are standardized for all Medicaid

certified long term care facilities. If you choose a different setting such as assisted living or community, the cost share amount will be impacted.

14. Are there benefits for patients relocating to BNBMC?

Patients at BNBMC will have access to acute care services and a convenient, broad range of services in one facility in centrally located Paramus, while still remaining within the County-owned system. These services include an in-house pharmacy, all diagnostic testing on site, as well as hearing and dental care.

15. The State of New Jersey requires providing 60 days' notice when facilities close. How much time will patients have to make a decision?

Residents and their families will have through the end of October to make a decision, providing ample time to meet the required 60 days' notice prior to closure.

16. What assistance will the County provide to patients and families and will the County provide transportation/relocation services?

The County is dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition that minimizes disruption for residents and employees. Patient Care Coordinators and other staff will be working closely with residents and their families to provide information and assistance during this transition. For any residents who do not make an alternative arrangement of their own, the County will help them transfer to BNBMC's Long-Term Nursing Care program in centrally located Paramus. Ambulance and other necessary transportation services will be provided for all residents to their new location at no cost to the resident or family.

17. What is a Patient Care Coordinator?

Residents and their families will have a dedicated BCHCC staff member to assist them in their transition. We will provide you with the staff member's name, location, phone number and email address.

18. What will happen to the employees as a result of the closure?

Employees will continue in their current roles throughout the closure and will have opportunities for alternative employment, incentives, and retirement options.

19. How will the decision impact families that need short and long term care for family members?

The County is dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition for our residents, who have become part of our extended family over the years. BCHCC will remain in full operation and fully staffed, providing the same level of care throughout the process.

20. How have you communicated this decision to residents, residents' families, employees and the community?

The County notified residents, families, employees and the community through a series of letters, phone calls, in person meetings, frequently asked questions and press releases. In addition, we are working closely with the New Jersey Department of Health and Department of Human Services, including the Medicaid Managed Care Organization and their resident care managers. In the coming weeks and months, the County will be holding meetings with residents, employees, and other key stakeholders to help answer questions and assist with the transition. These FAQs will continue to be updated as additional information becomes available.