



Discontinuation of Inpatient Labor & Delivery Services at Valor Health Hospital

Additional Information

Valor Health is a county owned health system passionate about our mission to serve a healthy, vibrant community. We have been caring for Gem County residents for sixty years and we want to be able to continue to do so for another sixty years.

The recent decision to discontinue inpatient labor and delivery services at Valor Health Hospital was not taken lightly. While we understand members of the community are impacted by this change, we feel strongly this decision supports our fiscal responsibility while increasing our ability to provide more readily utilized healthcare services for Gem County into the future. Closing our labor and delivery services supports our current financial viability which is essential for survival as the community's non-profit health system.

Labor and delivery services will end on June 1, 2023. Valor Health is committed to working with our expecting mothers to make sure they have reliable, continued care, and education about the safest and most convenient delivery options.

FAQ:

- **Why will Valor Health no longer offer inpatient labor and delivery services?**

Staffing-

We have been unsuccessful in our ability to recruit and retain a full team of high quality and broad-spectrum nurses needed to provide a labor and delivery program with exceptional standards of quality for our patients. Our nurses must be proficient in skills across multiple departments (emergency, inpatient medicine, and labor & delivery) and be available 24/7/365 to provide care safely and effectively. We have exhausted many different staffing models to meet these needs, yet they have proven unsustainable. Most recently, we have been unable to consistently keep our labor and delivery unit open and available to expecting mothers.

Volumes-

Valor Health has been working to grow its labor and delivery program in recent years with some successes; however, Valor is only projected to deliver fewer than 55 babies during this fiscal year (October 2022- September 2023). Census data estimates there are 200 deliveries in Gem County each year, meaning Valor is only serving about 25-30% of expectant mothers in our community annually. In the last few years, we have made significant investments to support our labor and delivery program, but it continues to be underutilized.

Financial Pressures-

Providing healthcare in rural America has always been extremely challenging and even more so in recent years. Since 2005, over 180 rural hospitals have closed including 64 critical access hospitals (Beckers 2022). Valor Health is not immune to these challenges- especially financial challenges. The cost of doing business is slowly surpassing revenue generated in almost every line of business we operate, and we must adapt to be successful. We do not receive any tax dollars from the residents of Gem County or from our county budget. Our health system is solely dependent on operational income, leading to greater responsibility for our own financial sustainability. Valor is working diligently to decrease expenses in response to financial challenges and has been working continuously to improve access to healthcare and expand crucial services available in our community, such as emergency, urgent care, and family medicine services.

- **What is required to run a labor and delivery program?**

For decades, Valor Health has worked to support the substantial infrastructure required to provide the community with a labor and delivery program. A thriving labor and delivery program requires a full set of highly trained physicians, labor and delivery nurses, and respiratory therapists. In addition, a complete team of surgical nurses and anesthesia providers is necessary 24/7 for deliveries, in the event of an immediate or emergency c-section. Labor and delivery is an *always on* service. We believe a sometimes-on, sometimes-off model of care is not worthy of the people of Gem County.

- **How common is it to have labor and delivery services at a Critical Access Hospital (CAH) such as Valor Health?**

It is not common for a CAH serving a rural community like Gem County to deliver babies, especially those facilities that are closer to urban areas. Valor Health is 1 of 27 Critical Access Hospitals in Idaho- only 12 of those 27 facilities offer labor and delivery services. There are only 9 county owned hospitals in Idaho- only 3 of those 9 organizations offer labor and delivery services.

- **Will Valor Health continue to provide prenatal and postpartum care?**

YES- We are dedicated to providing increased prenatal and postpartum care, education, and resources for both mom and baby at our Valor Health Family Medicine Clinic. Only the location of our mothers' deliveries is changing. We are working closely with our providers to build partnerships with nearby health systems in order to pave a clear path for alternative delivery care for our patients.

- **I am currently expecting. What should I do?**

Expectant mothers are urged to call Valor Health Family Medicine at (208) 365-6004 to discuss their options. Our physicians and clinic team will work closely with you to create a personalized care plan. We value and appreciate your dedication to use local services for your pregnancy and for the postpartum care for you and your precious new baby.

- **What if a mother has an emergency and needs to deliver at Valor Health?**

The Valor Health Emergency Department continues to be open and available 24/7/365 should a pregnant mother experience the need for an emergency delivery. Our team is prepared to manage these situations and we have protocols in place to conduct emergency deliveries or transfer patients based on their immediate medical needs.

- **Will there be any impact on other services at Valor Health?**

NO- Discontinuing deliveries will not impact other services at Valor Health. This change will allow us to address staffing demands in other critical areas such as our emergency department. We are proud to serve nearly 5,000 patients each year in our emergency department and nearly 20,000 community members with other patient care services. If you would like to learn more about the services we do provide, please visit valorhealth.org.

- **What is the leadership structure at Valor Health and how were community viewpoints considered in the decision to close labor and delivery?**

The Valor Health Board of Trustees is made up of voting members from our community who have been appointed by the Gem County Commissioners and voluntarily represent the best interests of their community and Valor Health. The Trustees have ultimate authority and responsibility for the strategic vision and operations of Valor Health. The Board employs a Chief Executive Officer with the qualifications and experience to serve as the leader of the organization and who is accountable for all operations and implementation of strategy.

Valor leadership shared information and received input from many sources when considering the decision to close labor and delivery services. Some of these sources include our medical staff, physician members of our Labor and Delivery Workgroup, department managers, and volunteer board and committee members from the community. The viability and sustainability of labor and delivery services is not a new discussion for the board, leadership, and medical staff. The recommendation to discontinue labor and delivery services was brought to the Board of Trustees in accordance with legal statute and was unanimously approved.