**SHARON HOSPITAL FAQ**

**Thank you for your interest in Sharon Hospital’s transformative plan.**

**If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to SharonHospital@NuvanceHealth.org**

**Question:** What is the Sharon Hospital Transformation?

**Answer:** Sharon Hospital’s future is not only sustainable, it is vibrant. Together, we have charted a path forward that best meets the needs of our patients, families, and staff by enhancing the care we offer in our community, while helping our patients access the advanced care and services offered within the Nuvance Health system.

This plan includes:

* **Expanding Primary & Ambulatory Care:** Sharon Hospital will pursue opportunities to expand its primary care footprint and ambulatory service offerings to best meet the current and future needs of the Sharon community. Investing in these services will allow Sharon Hospital to prevent, detect, monitor, and treat health issues earlier, improving patient outcomes and reducing the need for more complex care that requires a hospital stay.
* **Investing in Behavioral Health:** Sharon Hospital will expand their adult behavioral health offerings to fill a gap in care in the surrounding region. By expanding adult behavioral health offerings, Sharon Hospital can better meet the needs of our growing 65+ population and expand our services to adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the future.
* **Consolidating Inpatient Care Services to Capture Efficiencies in Staffing and Care:** Sharon Hospital will convene clinical and administrative work groups, including physicians and nurses, to develop a plan to effectively consolidate inpatient care services. These workgroups will ultimately allow for more effectively assigned staff and resources to better serve the needs of our patients, while keeping patients at Sharon Hospital whenever possible.
* **Phasing out Labor & Delivery:** Sharon Hospital has seen fewer than 200 annual deliveries for the past four years, an average rate of fewer than one delivery per day, some days passing with no births at all in a fully staffed unit. An underused Labor & Delivery unit cannot be maintained while also ensuring Sharon Hospital can continue serving its patients and community in the long-term.

Sharon Hospital plans to close its Labor & Delivery unit, pending regulatory approval, phasing out these services over the course of eight to 12 months to allow all of today’s pregnant mothers who planned to deliver at Sharon Hospital to do so. Nuvance Health is committed to working with future mothers in the Sharon community to find the right facility for them, while understanding these decisions are ultimately a choice between each woman, her family, and her care team.

* **Consolidating Surgical Services to a More Efficient and Productive Model:** Sharon Hospital will convene work groups of administrative and clinical staff, including physicians and nurses, to develop an operational plan to evaluate the days and hours of operating room availability to improve the efficiency of the currently practiced surgical schedule.

**Question:** Why have Sharon Hospital and Nuvance Health decided to make these changes?

**Answer:** The healthcare landscape is changing, and rural and community hospitals are endangered across the country.

Nuvance Health—like all health systems—has a responsibility to weigh all potential options and opportunities to ensure Sharon Hospital can continue meeting the needs of our patients and community in the long-term.

After a thorough and deliberate planning process, we developed a strategic direction that is focused on *deliberate growth* to strengthen the services in our community’s greatest areas of need. However, to ensure Sharon Hospital can best meet the needs of our community, we also had to make difficult decisions regarding redesigns and closures of underutilized service lines.

We are confident Sharon Hospital has a bright future as a key part of the Nuvance Health system, and we remain committed to serving the needs of our patients and community.

We look forward to keeping our community members apprised in the coming months and years as this long-term plan unfolds.

**Question:** What is the benefit of being part of the Nuvance Health system?

**Answer:** Healthcare is moving toward a system-wide approach in caring for communities—and that’s a good thing. As part of Nuvance Health, Sharon Hospital clinicians can easily refer patients in need of services not offered at our hospital to a number of high-quality specialists within the system. This makes it simple to access specialty and tertiary services not offered in most community settings.

We saw an example of this during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when critically ill patients were stabilized at Sharon Hospital and transferred to tertiary care at another Nuvance Health facility. In this instance, being part of Nuvance Health allowed Sharon Hospital to maximize the care it could offer while keeping patients close to home.

But we also see our patients benefit from the Nuvance Health system every day. We regularly transfer care to our sister hospitals when a particular service cannot be provided here. Once treated, those same community members are returned to their community to receive services in Sharon.

**Question:** What data was considered in the decision-making process?

**Answer:** This decision was the result of a thoughtful and deliberate planning process, during which we considered a wide variety of data. The information reviewed includes but is not limited to:

1. An internal analysis of our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the future
2. National and regional trends for community and rural hospitals
3. Regional demographic trends
4. An independent analysis from Stroudwater Associates—a leading consultant group for rural and community health systems nationwide—commissioned in partnership with the [Foundation for Community Health](http://fchealth.org/)
5. Qualitative feedback, including conversations from past community forums and planning discussions with trusted representatives of our staff and community

**Question:** What is the benefit of investing in primary and ambulatory care, and what does this mean for our community?

**Answer:** Enhancing our primary care and ambulatory services will allow us to detect, monitor, and treat health issues earlier, thus better serving our patients and community. This enhancement will ultimately improve patient outcomes by reducing the need for more complex, inpatient care or visits to the emergency department.

Data shows a need for additional primary care providers in Sharon and the surrounding area. We also know there is a need for outpatient services to identify and treat chronic diseases—such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and arthritis—which are responsible for 70 percent of deaths in the US and can often be effectively managed through early detection and intervention.

By investing in additional primary care providers and increasing access to ambulatory services, Sharon Hospital can improve the overall health of our population, while reserving the inpatient setting for more severe patient concerns.

**Question:** Why are you investing in behavioral health, and what does this mean for our community?

**Answer:** There is a need for more behavioral health services in northwest Connecticut and the Hudson Valley—an estimated 50 percent of all Americans are diagnosed with a mental illness at some point in their lifetime, a number many experts believe has risen due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as Sharon Hospital supports our patients through injuries and physical illnesses, we must be able to help navigate behavioral health concerns.

Sharon Hospital has an opportunity to build on our existing senior behavioral health unit to become a leader in and a regional hub for adult behavioral healthcare. By investing in senior behavioral health now, we can better meet the needs of our growing 65+ population and expand our offerings to adolescents and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the future, filling another critical gap in for our region.

**Question:** What does “consolidating inpatient care services to capture efficiencies in staffing and care” mean?

**Answer:** Over the past several years, we have identified multiple opportunities to optimize the use of our space and better serve our patients and community. We are convening a workgroup of the individuals most familiar with our facility—our clinical and medical staff—to put together an operational plan to accomplish this.

Consolidating inpatient care services will allow us to better serve the current needs of our patients, while keeping care at Sharon Hospital whenever possible.

**Question:** Why are you phasing out Labor & Delivery?

**Answer:** Rural and community hospitals across the country are struggling to stay afloat. To continue serving our community, we believe it is the responsibility of *every* health system to adapt to provide the services its community needs most to remain sustainable in the long-term.

Like facilities across the country, Sharon Hospital has seen a rapid decline in birth rates over the past decade. For the past four years, Sharon Hospital has performed fewer than 200 annual deliveries. If Sharon Hospital is going to remain sustainable and continue to serve our patients into the future, we know we cannot maintain a Labor & Delivery unit that sees fewer than one delivery per day.

This was an incredibly difficult decision. We understand how meaningful these services have been to our community over the years, and we value the compassionate care provided by our Labor & Delivery team.

**Question:** What is the plan for women in our community who are currently pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant?

**Answer:** We plan to phase out our maternity services over the course of eight to 12 months, so pregnant mothers who have developed a relationship with their care teams at Sharon Hospital will have the opportunity deliver their babies at Sharon Hospital as planned.

We understand this is a special time for our pregnant mothers, and we are committed to maintaining these services for them throughout this time. However, the only factor that would prevent our current patients from delivering at Sharon Hospital is unexpected departures hindering our ability to appropriately staff the unit. We care deeply about our Labor & Delivery staff members, and we are working hard to incentivize staff to stay with us through this transition and to help them find a new position within the Nuvance Health system post-closure. Should staffing challenges impact our ability to have deliveries at Sharon Hospital, we will help affected mothers find the best solution for their individual needs.

**Question:** Where will women in our area give birth in the future?

**Answer:** Deciding where to deliver is a choice each woman should make with the help and guidance of her physician, care team, family, and anyone else she chooses to consult.

The Nuvance Health system and our region have several exceptional facilities, where delivering mothers will receive compassionate, high-quality care. In fact, Danbury Hospital, Northern Dutchess Hospital, and Vassar Brothers Medical Center are all Nuvance Health facilities. This means as Nuvance Health continues its work to improve coordination in women’s healthcare system-wide, Sharon Hospital patients will see continuity in their primary, specialty, and pre- and post-natal care without transferring their records to an external system.

**Question:** What will happen to pregnant women in our community who may go into labor and are unable to make it to other facilities on time?

**Answer:** Based on data reviewed from similar Labor & Delivery closures in rural communities, we do not expect that we will need to perform deliveries in our Emergency Department.

Nevertheless, we will ensure our teams are prepared for any emergency, particularly those affecting pregnant women in our community. And, local EMS will be involved in developing a process for safe patient transport.

**Question:** What changes are you making to the surgical schedule?

**Answer:** We are convening a workgroup of clinical staff to help us determine how we can adjust our surgical schedule to best meet the needs of our patient population, while remaining efficient in our resource and staffing needs. We look forward to sharing our updates with the community once these workgroups have developed their operational plans.

**Nuvance Health and Sharon Hospital leadership want to reiterate our gratitude for the support of our staff and community. We would also like to thank all those who were part of this process. We look forward to continuing this collaborative process.**

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