



Media Information

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RiverStone Health refocusing on community-based Hospice services

BILLINGS – As RiverStone Health works to sustain high-quality services for the community with an increasingly tight budget, the difficult decision has been made to cease operations at our inpatient Hospice Home. The Hospice Home has long operated at a financial loss that has grown larger in recent years.

Even with support of generous donors and fundraising by the RiverStone Health Foundation, Hospice Home operations have had to be subsidized. In addition to funding challenges, the Hospice Home has struggled to remain fully staffed. The 12-bed Home usually has not been fully occupied due to limited staffing.

The RiverStone Health Board of Health considered a detailed financial analysis of the Hospice Home operating costs and future projections at its meeting on Feb. 22 and unanimously approved the Finance Committee’s recommendation to cease operating the Home by June 30.

This decision allows RiverStone Health to continue and expand our community Hospice that serves patients in their own homes – regardless of their ability to pay. As of this week, we are caring for 10 patients in the Hospice Home and 51 Hospice patients in their own homes, nursing homes or assisted living facilities.

“Under more robust funding levels, our inpatient Hospice Home operated as a mission-driven, community service, relying on the financial success of our entire organization to remain operational,” said Jon Forte, RiverStone Health President and CEO. “Our goal with this closure is to ensure the sustainability of our organization, to support the continued employment of those on our Hospice Home team, and to strengthen our Community Hospice and Home Care programs, which remain core services of RiverStone Health.”

The 18 current Hospice Home employees are being offered retention pay and a bonus if they choose to keep working at the Home until it closes. RiverStone Health will offer other jobs to Hospice Home

team members, if they want to stay with our organization. That will include opportunities in community Hospice and Home Care where we continue to see increasing demand for services.

“The Hospice Home closure is a financial decision that does not in any way reflect on the high quality of professional care provided by our outstanding staff,” Forte said.

The Board considered that the Home’s operating expenses are exceeding revenues, including donations, by more than \$340,000 through the first half of the fiscal year. The Home has consistently sustained operating losses since fiscal year 2012. The net cost to the organization has ranged from \$110,000 to \$836,000 over the last twelve years.

The average daily number of patients in the 12-bed Home has decreased from a high of an average of 11 patients in fiscal year 2015 to an average of seven patients in fiscal year 2023. Revenue has been reduced as the number of patients declined.

Immediately after the Board of Health meeting on Feb. 22, RiverStone Health began communicating with Hospice staff, patients, families, volunteers and donors about the upcoming change. We discontinued new admissions to the home but will continue to provide care for all current patients.

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