

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Office of Licensure and Certification

Staff Analysis

April 27, 2020

Sentara Obici Hospital (4/22/2020)

Suffolk, Virginia

Temporarily add 80 beds at Sentara Obici Hospital

Hospital

Sentara Obici Hospital is located in the city of Suffolk, Virginia, in Planning District (PD) 20, Health Planning Region (HPR) V.

Background

On March 12, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam declared a state of emergency throughout Virginia in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Subsequent to this declared state of emergency, on March 20, 2020, Governor Northam signed Executive Order 52 (EO 52) providing that notwithstanding the provisions of Article 1.1 of Chapter 4 of Title 32.1 of the Code of Virginia the State Health Commissioner (Commissioner), at his discretion, may authorize any general hospital or nursing home to increase licensed bed capacity as determined necessary by the Commissioner to respond to increased demand for beds resulting from COVID-19. Such beds authorized by the Commissioner under EO 52 would, notwithstanding Virginia Code § 32.1-132, constitute licensed beds that do not require further approval or the issuance of a new license.

According to the 2018 data provided by Virginia Health Information (VHI), Sentara Obici Hospital operates an inventory of 175 beds (**Table 1**). Sentara Obici Hospital is taking all reasonable efforts to reduce inpatient census to free beds to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, including complying with the March 25, 2020 Order of Public Health Emergency 2.

Request

Sentara Obici Hospital cites an emergent need to expand bed capacity due to the sudden and overwhelming increase in acute care cases resulting from COVID-19 infection. Specifically, Sentara Obici Hospital requests authorization to temporarily add 80 beds, including 34 ICU beds and 46 medical/surgical beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout Sentara Obici Hospital, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. The resulting bed configuration at Sentara Obici Hospital is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Sentara Obici Hospital's Requested Temporary Bed Inventory

Bed Classification	Licensed Beds	Requested Additional Beds	Resulting Available Beds
Adult ICU	12	34	46
Medical/Surgical	130	46	176
Obstetric	13	0	13
Psychiatric	20	0	20
Total	175	80	255

Source: VHI (2018)

Considerations

In determining whether a need exists for the requested additional bed capacity, the State Health Commissioner established the following factors for consideration, when applicable.

1. Ongoing efforts to increase the availability of existing beds, such as suspension of elective procedures:

Sentara Obici Hospital has made assurances that, in an effort to free up existing capacity, and in compliance with the March 25, 2020 Order of Public Health Emergency 2, they have suspended all elective procedures that, if delayed, are not anticipated to cause harm to the patient.

2. The availability of professional and ancillary staff to provide care in the additional beds:

Sentara Obici Hospital has made assurances that it has the necessary professional staff to provide care in the additional beds. Sentara Obici Hospital will take a phased, sequenced approach to open additional ICU or medical/surgical beds on demand. As a system, Sentara Healthcare has developed alternate models of provider, nursing care, respiratory and other support services. The nursing care model will be expanded with registered nurses from the system resource pool as well as other Sentara Healthcare divisions.

3. The availability of medical supplies and personal protection equipment in the facility:

Sentara Obici Hospital has made assurances that it has sufficient access to available medical supplies and personal protection equipment (PPE) in the facility. Sentara Obici Hospital has acquired addition PPE and supplies through alternate vendors over the past three months. Additionally, using CDC-approved methods, Sentara Obici Hospital is reprocessing N95 masks and other PPE. The Virginia Disaster Medical Advisory Committee (VDMAC) has suggested moving toward the adoption of crisis standards of care to, in part, preserve available supplies.

4. The specific plan for increasing bed capacity:

Sentara Obici Hospital requests authorization to temporarily add 80 beds, including 34 ICU beds and 46 medical/surgical beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout Sentara Obici Hospital, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. The additional licensed beds will either be used to care for COVID-19 patients directly or to supplement existing operations so that existing beds can be used for COVID-19 patients, depending on the nature and timing of patient demand.

5. Where the beds will be located and the life safety code considerations of the location:

As previously discussed, Sentara Obici Hospital intends to distribute the requested beds throughout the existing hospital, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. The beds are to be located in existing clinical care space that has 100% sprinkler and smoke detection coverage, and that are part of the hospital's existing life safety compartments and suites. Therefore, the spaces meet life safety code requirements for the type of patients or residents expected to occupy the space.

6. The availability of beds at other community hospitals and nursing homes in the community:

Per the 2018 data provided by VHI, there are 2,850 licensed inpatient beds in PD 20, of which 343 are intensive care unit beds and 1,932 are medical/surgical beds. The overall bed capacity data does not inherently take into account the extent to which, due to the rapid rate of infection of COVID-19, how many new cases may arise, and thereby overwhelm Sentara Obici Hospital's and the area's capacity to treat patients, thereby jeopardizing the quality of care for residents of PD 20. Sentara Obici Hospital's proposal increases their bed capacity by 45%, and is a 3% increase in bed capacity in the planning district.

7. Other alternatives to adding bed capacity:

As discussed, given that Sentara Obici Hospital has already provided assurances that they have suspended all elective procedures, as well as the difficulty in anticipating how many cases of COVID-19 may arise in PD 20, the addition of beds in an existing medical care facility space represents the best option.

8. The current state of COVID-19 in the community:

The Virginia Department of Health reports that Virginia currently has 13,535 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus, and 458 deaths.¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed 928,619 current cases in the United States, with 52,459 deaths.²

¹ <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/>

² https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcases-in-us.html

The Western Tidewater Health District currently reports 371 cases of COVID-19 patients, with another 284 patients in the surrounding jurisdictions.

Findings and Conclusions

Sentara Obici Hospital requests authorization to temporarily add 80 beds, including 34 ICU beds and 46 medical/surgical beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout Sentara Obici Hospital, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. Sentara Obici Hospital has demonstrated that the rapid rise in COVID-19 cases has created an emergent need for a temporary increase in bed capacity. In the absence of a temporary increase to bed capacity in the planning district, it is conceivable that the continued rise of COVID-19 cases could overwhelm the hospital's capacity to treat patients, thereby jeopardizing the quality of care for residents of PD 20, and limit the ability of health care providers to adequately treat and limit the spread of the virus.

Staff Recommendations

The Division of Certificate of Public Need recommends the **approval** of Sentara Healthcare's request to temporarily add 80 beds at Sentara Obici Hospital. This staff recommendation is based on the following findings.

1. Sentara Obici Hospital has demonstrated that, due to the reasonable expectation of a sudden and overwhelming increase in acute care patients resulting from COVID-19 infection, Sentara Obici Hospital has an immediate need to temporarily add 80 licensed inpatient beds.
2. Sentara Obici Hospital's plan for training and shifting ambulatory staff is a reasonable solution for staffing the additional beds.
3. Sentara Obici Hospital's plan and ability to obtain equipment and supplies is reasonable within the confines of the current crisis.
4. Sentara Obici Hospital's plan to expand bed capacity in existing hospital space throughout the campus assures patient safety is maintained from a fire and life safety code perspective.