

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Office of Licensure and Certification
Staff Analysis

April 24, 2020

Sentara RMH Medical Center (4/22/2020)

Harrisonburg, Virginia

Temporarily add 59 Beds at Sentara RMH Medical Center

Hospital

Sentara RMH Medical Center (SRMH) is located in Harrisonburg, Virginia in Planning District (PD) 6, Health Planning Region (HPR) I.

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.

Per the 2018 data provided by Virginia Health Information (VHI), SRMH operates an inventory of 238 beds (**Table 1**). SRMH is taking all reasonable efforts to comply with the March 25, 2020 Order of Public Health Emergency 2, including suspension of elective procedures and planning to convert step-down and progressive care unit beds to intensive care unit (ICU) beds.

Request

SRMH 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, SRMH requests authorization to temporarily add 11 medical/surgical beds and 48 ICU beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout SRMH, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. The resulting bed configuration at SRMH is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: SRMH Requested Temporary Bed Inventory

Bed Type	Beds	Requested Additional Beds	Resulting Available Beds
Adult ICU	16	48	64
Med/Surg	168	11	179
Obstetric	22	0	22
Pediatric	12	0	12
Psych Bed - Other Adult	20	0	20
Total	238	59	297

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:

SRMH 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:

SRMH has made assurances that it has the necessary professional staff to provide care in the additional beds. SRMH 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:

SRMH has made assurances that it has sufficient access to available medical supplies and personal protection equipment (PPE) in the facility. SRMH has acquired additional PPE and supplies through alternate vendors over the past three months. Additionally, using CDC-approved methods, SRMH 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:

SRMH has requested 59 beds, consisting of 11 medical/surgical beds and 48 ICU beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout SRMH, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care.

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

As previously discussed, SRMH 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 space meets 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 526 licensed inpatient beds in PD 6, of which 373 are medical surgical beds and 37 are intensive care unit 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 SRMH's, and the area's, capacity to treat patients, thereby jeopardizing the quality of care for residents of PD 6. SRMH's proposal increases their normal bed capacity by 25% and is an 11% increase in standing bed capacity in the planning district.

7. Other alternatives to adding bed capacity:

As discussed, given that SRMH 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:

At the time of this writing, the Virginia Department of Health reports that Virginia has 11,594 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus, and 410 deaths.¹ To date, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has confirmed 828,441 current cases in the United States, with 46,379 deaths.² The Central Shenandoah Health District currently reports 599 confirmed cases of patients with COVID-19, with another 225 patients in the surrounding jurisdictions.

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

Findings and Conclusions

SRMH proposes to temporarily add 59 beds, consisting of 11 medical/surgical beds and 48 ICU beds. The requested beds will be distributed throughout SRMH, in spaces that are currently being utilized for patient care. Due to the sudden and overwhelming increase in acute care cases resulting from COVID-19 infection throughout the Commonwealth, SRMH has an immediate need to temporarily add 59 beds. SRMH 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 6, and limit the ability of health care providers adequately treat and limit the spread of the virus.

Staff Recommendations

The staff recommends the **approval** of Sentara RMH Medical Center's request to add temporarily 59 beds at Sentara RMH Medical Center. The staff's recommendation is based on the following findings.

1. SRMH has demonstrated that, due to the reasonable expectation of a sudden and overwhelming increase in acute care patients resulting from COVID-19 infection, SRMH has an immediate need to temporarily add 59 licensed inpatient beds.
2. SRMH's plan for training and shifting repurposed staff is a reasonable solution for staffing the additional beds.
3. SRMH's plan and ability to obtain equipment and supplies is reasonable within the confines of the current crisis.
4. SRMH's plan to expand bed capacity in existing hospital space assures patient safety is maintained from a fire and life safety code perspective.