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Brattleboro Memorial Hospital plans to close birthing services

By Chris Mays, Brattleboro Reformer



Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
REFORMER FILE PHOTO

BRATTLEBORO — Brattleboro Memorial Hospital will close obstetric services, including the Birthing Center, within the next six to nine months while continuing to explore alternatives.

On Wednesday, BMH announced that its Board of Directors approved the plan with no final closure date established. Hospital leaders will continue talks with the Vermont Agency of Human Services, the Governor's Office, legislators and other stakeholders to determine if "a sustainable path forward can be identified to preserve local access to obstetric care," according to the announcement.

"We appreciate the partnership and engagement of state leaders as we work through these challenges," Dr. Tony Blofson, acting co-CEO, said in the announcement. "We remain committed to exploring every reasonable option and will continue working collaboratively to identify another solution. Our discussions with Gov. Scott and other state leaders reflect the urgency of the situation and our hope that, together, we can find a path forward that continues to serve families in our region."

BMH said the Birthing Center remains open and fully operational during the planning period. If any changes should occur, it will "work closely with patients and their healthcare providers to ensure continuity of care."

BMH said it anticipates "maintaining services throughout the planning and regulatory process. However, patient safety and the quality of care delivered remain the foremost consideration."

"Should circumstances arise that could affect these factors, including workforce availability, quality or safety considerations, or other operational requirements, BMH will adjust the timeline as needed, including implementing an accelerated timeframe if necessary," the announcement states.

BMH said it also "remains committed to maintaining access to comprehensive gynecologic (GYN) services," and is

"actively developing plans to ensure these services remain available locally and sustainably, regardless of the outcome of obstetric services."

"Like many rural hospitals in Vermont and across the country, BMH is facing a fundamental mismatch between the cost of providing safe maternity care and the reimbursement it receives," the announcement states. "The commercial insurance and Medicaid payers that support women's health services consistently reimburse well below the actual cost of care, leaving many Vermont hospitals facing the same difficult financial reality. At the same time, labor and delivery services must maintain specialized clinical teams and 24-hour readiness regardless of patient volume. Nationwide declines in birth rates, including at BMH, have further reduced the number of deliveries while inflation continues to increase the fixed costs of providing care."

The proposed closure is said to follow "months of evaluating alternative care and staffing models, and reflects ongoing challenges related to financial sustainability and workforce availability." Declining birth volumes, rising operating costs and persistent difficulties recruiting and retaining obstetric clinicians are cited for making the current model "increasingly difficult to sustain without significant external support."

"We have worked diligently to identify solutions, but without additional financial and workforce support, we cannot continue operating a service line that incurred a \$3.8 million loss in 2025, with losses projected to grow to approximately \$4.8 million this fiscal year," Dr. Elizabeth McLarney, acting co-CEO, said in the announcement. "Without meaningful changes to reimbursement or significant external support, losses of this magnitude are not sustainable for a community hospital. This is an incredibly difficult situation, and we recognize how deeply this impacts our patients, families, and community."

BMH said it "recognizes the essential role that local maternity and women's health services play in the community and is committed to keeping patients, staff, and the public informed as discussions progress. Additional updates will be shared as more information becomes available."

https://www.reformer.com/local-news/brattleboro-memorial-hospital-plans-to-close-birthing-services/article_d84aeb89-2d39-4e90-92c0-b6d7f1976ee8.html