



South Carolina Office of Rural Health

Supporting Vulnerable Rural Hospitals

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**Flex Reverse Site Visit
Bethesda, MD
July 19, 2017**

“Dedicated to providing access to quality health care in rural communities”

South Carolina Office of
Rural Health

The Role of a Flex Program/Coordinator

Sustainability Plans – South Carolina Hospital Transformation Program

- ✓ An intensive, facility-specific plan for the Target Hospital to not only prevent imminent closure but also focus on transitioning the hospital into a sustainable business model;
- ✓ Recommendations for utilizing the transformation funding to offset transition costs;
- ✓ Recommendations for funding remaining transition costs with hospital or community resources;
- ✓ Recommendations for ensuring that appropriate and viable services are provided in the Target Hospital community, serving the best interests of the patients and caregivers;
- ✓ Recommendations for strategic partnerships and alliances where practical; and
- ✓ Where partnerships are not practical, recommendations for coordination with the surrounding health care community including safety-net providers and tertiary hospitals.

Case Study

ABC Sustainability Plan

- Two parts
- Part 1 – Desktop review:
 - Population projections
 - Market share analyses
 - Opportunities
 - Geographic
 - Service Line
 - Age and Payer
 - Physician
- Partnership opportunity review
- *“Strict, narrow service offerings covered by a local physician base would be required to achieve a successful sustainability model, unless a more drastic, reimagined operational model is pursued”*

Post-Closure

- ABC's closure effectively hit the “pause” button on the Sustainability Plan
 - SC DHEC allows a facility to temporarily cease operations while still retaining their license for 12 months
- What was the role of SCORH in supporting the county at this point?
- What homework did we need to do?
 - Engaging local stakeholders
 - Engaging state leaders
 - Identifying potential solutions / models of care

County Sustainability Plan

- Utilized existing relationship with consultant to complete a sustainability plan focused on the needs of the county (part 2)
- Scope of work:
 - Recommend potential options for health care access that should be further studied by the community, especially focused on the long-term (2-4 years), and in the form of both potential partnerships and models of care
 - Recommend criteria/process to use for reviewing and vetting these options
 - Identify potential options for asset development and management using current resources as well as and funding needs to develop and sustain any potential new assets
 - Produce itemized list of steps needed to reach desired outcome(s), if realized within timeframe
 - Present findings to ABC County Council / community

Recommendations

- Most feasible option: the build and operation of a sophisticated urgent care center. This urgent care center should provide healthcare services to treat low to moderate acuity patients while also offering diagnostic services to include lab and imaging. With strong community support, an urgent care center could be a sustainable option for the community.
- Collaboration and partnership with local FQHC will be critical to the success of any new entrant into the community.

Recommendations

- Based on a break-even analysis, a free-standing (hospital outpatient) Emergency Department was determined to not be financially sound or sustainable based on projected patient volumes and payer mix.
- Going forward, the County's most pressing issues will be the location of a potential facility (existing versus new construction), potential operational partners, and related costs.

One Year Later

- A regional hospital two counties over just announced its intentions to build a free-standing ED to serve ABC county
- Advocacy by local economic developers and state elected officials helped move the issue forward
- Staff turnover at the state level and locally has made it more difficult to continuously engage with the process
- Continuous, clear communication is still difficult

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