

# SBLHC activates Internal Disaster Plan

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Sarah Bush Lincoln Center is activating its Internal Disaster Plan due to a surge of inpatients, according to an email sent to hospital staff by SBLHC President and CEO Jerry Esker.



The Education Center will be converted into a discharge area for inpatients and the hospital will be deploying a Mutual Aid Box Alarm System tent outside of the Emergency Department for patients who require a lower acuity of care.

The activation follows a surge of patients seeking care during a period of time when there are not enough beds to put patients in for proper treatment.

Typically, the hospital treats 80-100 patients each day but for the last few weeks the hospital has been treating upwards of 130 patients a day.

On Thursday, 33 COVID-19 patients were hospitalized and another 19 people were being cared for through the COVID @ Home program in which patients receive care from home via daily contact with a medical provider who monitors their condition.

In a press release from SBLHC, Esker said that it is uncommon to activate the Internal Disaster Plan. He added he wants the hospital to be the best place possible for large numbers of people who are ill.

“Hospitals throughout the State are experiencing large patient surges and open beds are becoming very limited. For that reason, transferring patients is not a practical option. We will do everything we can, and use all resources to ensure patients in this community receive the best care possible,” he said.

Esker added there is not a set end to the Internal Disaster Plan.

“We will remain on this Plan until we have some bed space in the Health Center and we’re able to turn the curve on this pandemic,” Esker said.

SBLHC will begin doing several things to adjust to the current state of the hospital, one being the MABAS tent.

The tent was originally erected in March 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and can care for up to six patients.

When appropriate, patients will be discharged from the Lumpkin Education Center (Entrance C) as they wait for rides home in an effort to free up beds sooner.

Currently, the nine-bed Critical Care Unit is full, but as people are recovered and able, they will be moved to a “step-down” unit, according to the press release. The goal of this is to make room for more severely ill patients.

SBLHC Vice President of Patient Care Continuum Sandy Miller said the hospital is using all of its available resources to create needed space for patients.

According to the press release, Emergency Department Physician and Medical Director Joe Burto, said people should try to go to their primary care provider or a walk-in clinic if at all possible.

“We have found that people have delayed seeking care and when they come to the ER, they are terribly sick. If you cannot see your doctor, go to a Walk-In Clinic if it is not an emergency,” Burto said. “We want you to be safe and get the care you need.”

Some SBLHC employees may be moved to other areas of the hospital where “they are most needed and have the skills and certifications to do this work.”

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