**Rural Emergency Hospital Op-ed Template**

\*Updated 7/13/2023

The following messaging is designed as an opinion editorial pitch template. You may use this to submit to your local media outlets. The content of this article is designed to help hospitals pursuing the Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) federal designation communicate the benefits and changes to their local community.

**ACTION ITEM:** Please thoroughly review this message and adjust it according to your own circumstances. If the bolded text regarding staffing is not correct, please remove or alter that statement. Also, fill in all highlighted portions as applicable to your organization, and then un-highlight those pieces of text.

**Suggested headline: Being a Rural Emergency Hospital Keeps Care in Your Community**

100 rural hospitals across the country have closed since 20051, and [INSERT YOUR HOSPITAL NAME] cannot afford to be one of those. It is our top priority to keep care close to home for the residents of [CITIES OR COUNTIES OF PRIMARY and SECONDARY SERVICE AREAS] and continue providing the healthcare services needed to have a healthy and thriving community. These past several years have been taxing for hospitals across the country which was only exacerbated by the pandemic. To mitigate closures and help hospitals in rural areas continue providing essential services, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) created a new Rural Emergency Hospital (REH) designation. **To best meet the needs of our patients,** **we have decided to pursue that REH designation.** This transition will have minimal impact on your care and be completed by [INSERT DATE/DEADLINE]

Pursuing this designation ensures our hospital’s future viability. We know our future success not only impacts the health and well-being of our community’s residents but also greatly impacts our local economy. As a patient, you will continue to receive the same level of care, similar services and still have the same friendly faces caring for you. The main changes brought by the REH designation will provide us with much-needed additional funding of a 5% boost in Medicare outpatient reimbursement and an average facility fee payment of $3.2 million a year. These added financial gains will help support our local hospital in retaining and recruiting talent, securing essential supplies and maintaining our infrastructure.

As part of the final REH designation ruling, hospitals seeking the REH designation must stop all inpatient admissions. However, patients under 24-hour observation may remain within our facility. The shift to relinquish the use of inpatient beds may feel like a large change, but in actuality on average we only have XX patients admitted weekly. We already transfer XX patients weekly to [INSERT HOSPITAL NAME] for most inpatient care. As two neighboring hospitals, we share the same goal of caring for our communities. Receiving the REH designation will not impact the majority of services you seek with us or things like how you pay your bill and view your medical records.

We will continue offering vital services including:

* Laboratory services which account for XX% of visits.
* Imaging and radiology services which account for XX% of visits.
* Outpatient surgeries which account for XX% of visits.
* Emergency department services, including 24-hour observations which account for XX% of visits.

**Our intention is to reallocate any impacted staff to other service areas. Our industry is experiencing significant staffing shortages and we cannot afford to lose any existing staff.**

Thank you for your continued support of your local hospital. Together, we create a thriving community and are happy to be able to continue serving you and your loved ones.

1<https://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/>

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