



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Southwest Health System Announces Temporary Closure of Family Birthing Center at Southwest Memorial Hospital

Cortez, CO – (June 7, 2023) – After careful consideration, Southwest Health System (SHS) has announced the planned temporary closure of the Family Birthing Center at Southwest Memorial Hospital. The Family Birthing Center will stop taking new patients at 7:00 a.m. on June 28, 2023, and temporarily close on July 1, 2023.

With the continued changes in the healthcare industry, SHS—like many other rural and community hospitals across the country—is forced to make difficult decisions to ensure our organization can continue to serve the community.

“I know this change will affect many in our community, including friends and family. We hope to evaluate and resume this service. I understand the necessity of having a hospital here in our community. Based on financial and staffing needs, we had to make this difficult decision to pause services,” said Shirley Jones, who chairs the Board of Directors of Southwest Health System. The SHS Board of Directors and leadership are committed to fulfilling the hospital’s mission to create a sustainable future where patients continue to receive high quality care locally.

David M. Faulkner, Interim CEO for Southwest Health System, shared: “We empathize with the expectant mothers in our community who were planning to give birth here at SHS in the coming months. We are committed to work with patients to find a birthing center in our region to meet their delivery needs.”

Unfortunately, over the last decade many rural and community hospitals across the country face manpower and financial challenges, similar to Southwest Health System. Over the coming months, our goal is to develop a plan that would allow us to resume these services.

Keeping a labor and delivery unit open is harder in rural areas. Contributing factors include:

- Reimbursement cuts.
- A community’s aging population that leaves less demand for obstetrical care.
- A decline or trend in low birth volume.
- Difficulty in recruiting obstetricians or family practice physicians with obstetrics training to practice in smaller communities
- This [CNN article](#) describes more.



“We appreciate all that Dr. Schmitt and Dr. Kaplan do for SHS and our community,” David M. Faulkner added. “As we continue to work closely with Dr. Schmitt and Dr. Kaplan, we encourage patients to consult with them for a personalized plan of care.”

About Southwest Health System

Southwest Health System operates Southwest Memorial Hospital, a critical access hospital, and Southwest Medical Group’s six clinics providing primary and specialty care services. SHS provides over 50 service lines to the community. SHS is a private, not-for-profit corporation operating under all guidelines and regulations for non-profits and is also governed by a volunteer board. For more information, visit www.swhealth.org.

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For Questions please contact:

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