**Labor and Delivery Services Update**

**Frequently Asked Questions for Patients**

Mayo Clinic is proud to be a part of the Albert Lea and Austin communities. Providing the highest quality health care close to home is our main focus. To do that sustainably, we have to make some adjustments to the services in this region, including the transition of labor and delivery services from our Albert Lea to our Austin campus.

This transition was initially expected to take place in 2020 with the completion of our new Family Birth Center on the Austin campus. However, due to an urgent staffing shortage we need to transition childbirth services earlier than planned.

**Q. When will labor and deliveries be moved from Albert Lea to the Austin campus?**

Labor and deliveries will begin to move to the Austin campus the week of October 28, 2019, with all labor and deliveries to be consolidated on the Austin campus effective October 30. Women who go into labor or are induced very near to or after the transition date will deliver in Austin (or another hospital of their choice) rather than in Albert Lea. We recognize that this is a significant change to the timeline, and that it impacts current patients who were planning to deliver in Albert Lea. We’re committed to working with individual patients and families to explore all options for revising their birth plan as needed or requested. As always, mothers should contact their OB provider with specific questions about their birth plan.

It’s important to remember both Albert Lea and Austin campuses will continue to offer pregnancy, post-partum and newborn/pediatric outpatient (clinic) care. After being discharged in Austin, new moms and their babies will be able to continue to receive all follow up care from their regular provider on either the Albert Lea or Austin campus.

**Q. Why did the move of labor and deliveries from Albert Lea to Austin have to be accelerated even though the new Family Birth Center in Austin will not be complete before the transition?**

Labor and delivery requires a full team of medical professionals to be available around the clock, every day of the year. This includes the delivering physician and a team of nurses, as well as a doctor for the baby, and a surgical team including anesthesia. Despite our best efforts to recruit and retain obstetricians and allied health staff, an urgent staffing shortage means keeping these large teams available for two birthing units is no longer possible.

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Q. Why can’t all childbirth services move to the Albert Lea campus temporarily until the new Austin Family Birth Center is completed in 2020?

It has been suggested by staff and community members that we move all deliveries to Albert Lea until the Family Birth Center is completed in 2020. That option was carefully evaluated by our teams and in the end was not implemented for the following reasons:

• The decision to consolidate labor and delivery on the Austin campus has been difficult for everyone, but particularly for our Albert Lea/Freeborn County patients who had planned to deliver in Albert Lea. Change can be disruptive and confusing for patients and families, and we don’t want to create any further disruption by introducing an additional temporary transition, then another transition a year later. We believe that following through with the single transition to Austin, although earlier than planned, is less disruptive than moving patients and staff back and forth multiple times.

• The Austin campus is staffed and equipped for overnight hospitalizations and surgeries that require hospitalization. This means that surgical teams (surgeons/obstetricians, nursing, anesthesia, technicians, etc.) are available in the hospital or on call 24/7 for all types of surgery, and are ready for emergency C-sections or other complications. It is very challenging to maintain these large teams around the clock, and it is no longer possible to maintain them in two locations. Because we are no longer doing inpatient or after-hours surgery in Albert Lea, we would be maintaining a 24/7 surgical call schedule in Albert Lea for an unpredictable, small volume of births requiring surgery. We simply do not have enough staff available to do so.

• The Austin campus has staff and facilities that can be used to supplement the resources in the labor and delivery area, such as an ICU, hospitalists available 24/7 for critical care, and additional staffed hospital beds for overflow should the labor and delivery unit fill up.

Q. What will happen if a mother goes into labor in or near Albert Lea and knows she will not make it to the Austin campus in time to deliver?

Just like today, all patients who need emergency care, including laboring mothers, should go to the nearest emergency department for immediate care. Albert Lea continues to have a fully staffed and equipped Level IV emergency department (the same level as Austin and our other Southeast Minnesota hospitals). If Albert Lea is the nearest emergency department, laboring mothers should go there if unable to reach Austin in time.

Depending on the specific situation (stage of labor, status of mother and baby, etc.), physicians will determine if it’s appropriate to transfer the patient to Austin to deliver, or to deliver in the emergency department. Should emergencies arise, the Albert Lea and Austin Emergency Department staff have training in delivering babies if a transfer is not possible. Our integrated care delivery system, including Telemedicine for the care of the mother and child, allows specialists to partner with the Emergency Department staff to guide the care of patients.

Q. Will pre- and post-natal care still be available in Albert Lea?

Yes. All pre and post-natal care, including office visits that occur during or after pregnancy, will still be provided in both Albert Lea and Austin, even after the transition of labor and delivery occurs. Pediatricians and Family Medicine care teams are also available on each campus.

Q. Once the transition occurs in late October, will patients have to pay for a transfer to Austin if they go into labor in Albert Lea?

Medically necessary ambulance transportation from the Albert Lea Emergency Department to admission to the hospital in Austin will be at no cost to patients, including labor and delivery patients.
Q. When will the Family Birth Center on the Austin campus be completed?

The new Family Birth Center is expected to be complete in mid-to-late 2020. The new unit will have 10 new larger rooms all equipped with the updated technology and amenities for labor and deliveries. The unit also will have a new C-section suite and updated family waiting area.

Even though the newly renovated Family Birth Center will not be fully complete by the time of the transition of all labor and deliveries to the Austin campus on October 30, our goal is to offer the best possible birth experience for all moms and families. Current rooms will be utilized, and new rooms will be opened as they are completed. Plans are currently in place to minimize any disruption during this special time for families and friends.

Q. Where do I go for more information or for updates?

A complete list of all services offered on each campus is available on our website, www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/albert-lea-austinfacts, which will be updated regularly.

For specific medical plans or needs, please contact your OB provider, a care team member, or a member of the Mayo Clinic Health System staff.