

## **Escarosa Hospital Council – Florida**

### **Overview**

In 2008, hospital leaders from seven Florida hospitals convened to discuss ways they could collaborate to benefit the communities they serve. Their goal was to revitalize the existing Escarosa Hospital Council, which had languished in recent years. Naval Hospital, Baptist Hospital, Jay Hospital, Sacred Heart Hospital of Pensacola, and West Florida Hospital, all in Pensacola; the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, Florida; Gulf Breeze Hospital, Gulf Breeze; and Santa Rosa Medical Center, Milton, are represented on the Council. Chief executive officers from these hospitals now meet at a different venue each quarter, sending their chief operating officers if they cannot attend. All seven CEOs have signed a mutual aid agreement, opening the door to sharing resources in the event of a disaster or emergency. Every third meeting, the American Hospital Association's regional executive for Florida is "dialed in" for a regulatory update.

### **Impact**

Taking a unified approach to community initiatives has proved successful. For example, the hospitals decided to collectively go tobacco free. A joint press release launched the campaign in 2009; since then, all but one of the hospitals are now tobacco free.

The hospital leaders' collegiality has extended into the community. At a leadership event in Pensacola, some of the Council members hosted a panel and Q&A session. Events such as these enhance community relations, as the public sees the health care leaders together—promoting health and wellness using a consistent message.

Council members have held in-depth conversations and shared ideas on numerous topics such as H1N1, hurricane preparedness, and the oil spill. A subgroup of emergency managers from the organizations met and participated in each hospital's disaster drill. These and other interactions by Council members are a benefit to the community.

### **Challenges/success factors**

For-profit, not-for-profit, and federal entities inherently have some competing interests. These can be overcome by putting aside what separates the organizations and instead focusing on the elements that unite them. Having a collegial environment promotes good business, shared ideas, and exchange of knowledge. In addition, the community's unprecedented support of the military has helped health care leaders achieve their organizations' mission locally.

### **Future direction/sustainability**

The Escarosa Hospital Council continues to meet and seek opportunities to collaborate.

**Advice to others**

Establishing a joint council with area hospital CEOs is well worth the time spent. Competing hospitals have many issues to talk about that affect everyone in the community. To get started, pick a date and send invitations. Commit to the collaboration, start small, and keep growing.

**Contact:** Captain Mary Alice Morro, NC, USN  
Chief of Staff, Navy Medicine East, Portsmouth, VA

**Telephone:** 757-953-0421

**E-mail:** [Maryalice.morro@med.navy.mil](mailto:Maryalice.morro@med.navy.mil)