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JFL Reports Significant Reduction in Traveling Nurses, Continued Services at Old Hospital Site

Emergency Room and outpatient services face challenges amid staffing changes

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Old Juan F. Luis Hospital site still houses important services, JFL CEO has revealed.
By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

In a brief update to the Territorial Hospitals Governing Board on Wednesday, Douglas Koch, CEO of the Juan F Luis hospital on St. Croix noted that concerted efforts to reduce the facility's reliance on contract workers is paying off.

Mr. Koch told board members that JFL is down to 17 traveling agency staffers from a high of 49, after a successful hiring campaign for nurses and other open positions. "Over the last several

months we've filled another 13 RN positions, which is great to see...I know that was a major focus area," Mr. Koch said.

He noted that traveling medical staff are still needed to work in "some of our allied health areas" including imaging and surgical services, and said that attention will be paid to recruiting for those positions as well so as to fill them with in-house employees.

Meanwhile, an assessment of service standards, which Mr. Koch said was new for hospitals across the country, shows that according to his analysis, "while people are here they're receiving good care but the overall perception is not where it needs to be." Areas needing improvement include outpatient services, which he says are often impacted by periodic pressure on the inpatient side of things. Emergency room scores are also below the national average, Mr. Koch disclosed. "As you have more and more longer wait times in your emergency room, that has more of a negative impact on the experience," he noted. Longer wait times are a result of the limited number of trauma bays at JFL North, as well as "the number of access points for our patients who use our emergency room as a primary care clinic," he said.

Mr. Koch also noted that a delay in the opening of the clinical administrative building at JFL North was caused by a water leak in the structure, but nevertheless is anticipating that the new admin center would be in use within the next 45 days.

Some services still remain in the JFL main compound, board members were told. "One of the major ones still lingering is outpatient radiology which is bone densitometry, mammography, breast ultrasound," noted Mr. Koch, saying that efforts were well underway to move those services to the Cardiac Center. "We hope that we can be in there within...maybe 120 days, but [we're] making a significant push to make that happen."

Outpatient dialysis, Mr. Koch noted, was also in the process of moving to a new location. "We are working now on design and hope to provide further updates to the board in the coming months of making that transition," he told board members.

Shortly after the JFL CEO's presentation, Wednesday's meeting moved into executive session where board members discussed human resource and procurement matters away from the public eye.