



## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Citizens Advisory Committee  
c/o Ruth Benfield

**FROM:** Susan Heath, Chief Nursing Officer

**DATE:** 2/13/2008

**SUBJECT:** High Occupancy Levels at Children's During December 2007 and January 2008

I would like to begin by thanking each of you on the Citizens Advisory Committee for the time and dedication you are devoting to this important master plan process. It is work that will profoundly impact the families of this region for many years to come.

It might be helpful to you as a committee to hear about the current situation and challenges we are facing at the hospital today. This busy winter viral and respiratory season has already resulted in a shortage of available patient beds at Children's.

The Emergency Department has seen a 22% increase over last year's volume and has been particularly busy over the past couple of months. This increase naturally leads to additional bed need on our medical and surgical units, resulting in significant admissions and discharges for this high volume of patients.

To assure timely admission to an inpatient bed, we need to achieve 65-75 percent occupancy. However, in January our occupancy exceeded this threshold on all but four days during the entire month. On our busiest day, we had 245 of our 250 beds full, putting the hospital at 98 percent capacity. This overcrowding is unprecedented in my 25 years at Children's.

During this time we have implemented innovative solutions in order to continue providing high-quality care to children. To accommodate the needs we:

- Moved quickly to create a 10-bed observation area near the Emergency Department to handle overflow.
- Opened a command center to bring leaders from all areas of the hospital together, to think creatively about how we could best streamline our processes to efficiently and safely move patients through the system.
- Looked at rescheduling surgeries to accommodate patients when we do not have the capacity we need. We recognize how difficult it is for a family to have their child's surgery moved to another day, and we are working closely with those families to minimize the impacts on them.
- Made efforts to support families by helping them make accommodations that take into account any delay or relocation, such as holding hotel rooms for them.

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I know you are aware of our need to eliminate the semi-private rooms at the hospital. During times of very high patient census, there is increased concern about patients developing hospital-acquired infection. There are a number of initiatives to minimize risk of these infections, such as our hand hygiene campaign, but the best answer will be single rooms.

While our recent high occupancy highlights our need for additional inpatient space, our providers, nurses, and clinical staff are doing an excellent job of providing compassionate, individualized care to every child. All departments, from clinical units to support services are working hard to be resourceful, while maintaining the same safe, quality care. As the Chief Nurse I am very proud of the care provided by our medical center to the children of this region during this time of unprecedented high census.

I hope this information is helpful and provides some context to the important task at hand.