

BUSINESS ADVOCATE

Encompass Health never stopped serving their patients. They made proactive changes to protect their employees and patients, so they could continue to provide their essential services safely and effectively.

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RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF A PANDEMIC



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ENCOMPASS HEALTH AND ITS ALABAMA LOCATIONS ADAPT TO PROTECT PATIENTS AND EMPLOYEES WHILE ALSO HELPING THOSE RECOVERING FROM COVID-19

Well before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, Encompass Health leadership was assessing the situation, determining just how it would adjust its care to protect both patients and employees.

As the company's operating environment adapted and evolved, it continued to offer services to patients recovering from life-changing illnesses and conditions such as stroke and brain injury. However, as more patients began recovering from COVID-19, it also became clear that those same services could benefit patients recovering from the virus as well.

Based in Birmingham, Alabama, Encompass Health is a national leader in integrated healthcare, offering both facility-based and home-based care through its network of inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and home health and hospice locations. Of its more than 130 inpatient rehabilitation hospitals in 37 states, seven are located in Alabama, as is the company's home office, together employing more than 2,200. Its home health and hospice segment employees another roughly 1,000 in the state.

Inpatient rehabilitation offers a hospital level of care with



around-the-clock nursing and intense therapy from physical, occupational and speech therapists, which is helping those who have been hospitalized due to complications from COVID-19 recover and return to their home and communities.

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"What we're seeing is that some of these patients have been at the acute hospital for an extended period," said Brad Kennedy, president of the company's South Central region, which includes Alabama. "They are extremely weak. Most

of them have difficulty walking or performing simple tasks. They are also experiencing cognitive issues. These can all be addressed and improved on in inpatient rehabilitation."

In inpatient rehabilitation, patients have a care team made up of nurses, therapists, case managers and a physician that help them set and accomplish specific goals unique to the

patient. Those recovering from COVID-19 in an Encompass Health hospital are receiving that same team approach.

While it varies from market to market, Kennedy said where needed, COVID-19 units have been set up inside Encompass Health hospitals to treat this patient population.



Though they are recovering from COVID-19, he said the hospitals treat them as they are still positive and assign them to rooms located away from the other patients. Staff is also donned in full personal protective equipment, and therapy takes place within the patient room instead of in the therapy gym.

While some markets have seen an influx of patients recovering from COVID-19, others are more business as usual, Kennedy said, but all have ramped up existing infection control and safety protocols to prevent the spread of the virus.

"People are still having strokes and other debilitating conditions and injuries that can benefit from inpatient rehabilitation," he said. "During this pandemic, our doors have remained open to patients, and we're constantly assessing the situation and updating policies and protocols to best protect our patients and employees."

In general, visitation is limited. When visitation is allowed, visitors undergo a screening process, including temperature checks. Employees, physicians and all essential vendors are also screened before entering the hospital. In our therapy gyms, social distancing practices are in place and equipment is thoroughly cleaned after each use.



Kennedy said he knows some of these protocols have been difficult, particularly the visitation policy, but he's overwhelmed by how staff has responded, finding creative solutions to keep family members connected and also supporting one another and their communities.

"Encompass Health is a resilient company, and our employees are our foundation," he said. "From setting up FaceTime calls to helping family members and friends locate their loved one's patient window, they've really gone above and beyond to keep our patients comfortable and in communications with their loved ones. During these challenging times, our employees have continued to provide high quality care, which truly does make them heroes." **BA**

LEFT PAGE

Staff members at Encompass Health have eagerly responded to new protocols in order to keep themselves and their patients safe.

THIS PAGE

Left: Therapeutic services never stopped at Encompass Health.

Right: Along with social distancing practices, Equipment in the therapy gyms are thoroughly cleaned after each use.

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