

# Major cutbacks ahead for West Side hospital

 By Ben Bradley

January 12, 2006 - Major cutbacks are being made at a hospital on Chicago's West Side. Bethany Hospital is closing its emergency room, maternity ward and cutting other hospital services. It's a move that's expected to have a negative impact on people who use the hospital as their primary source for healthcare.

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Advocate-owned Bethany Hospital's emergency room will close next month. The 125-bed hospital will be turned into a long-term specialty care facility by the spring.

Bethany's 125 beds are usually not full and many of the people who seek care here usually have to have the government pick up a big part of the tab. It is that combination that health officials say led this hospital to lose \$20 million last year and that is helping to inspire some of the changes.

But local residents say that the needs of the community should be more important than a company's bottom line.

"I used to always come, because the hospital is close to my house. I don't know why they're going to close it down," said Maurice Grant, East Garfield Park resident.

Grant was born at Bethany, but soon the hospital's emergency ward, maternity ward and intensive care will close. It will be turned into a long-term and specialty care center. It's a move that angers many in the community, because, for many, the community hospital is where they seek care for everything from the common cold to a heart attack.

"This is the area with some of the highest instances of diabetes, asthma and heart disease. And Advocate's response: Invest more? No, invest less. Go from a full-service hospital, turn it into a nursing home," said Joseph Geevarghese, Hospital Accountability Project.

Advocate says this congressional district has the highest number of hospital beds of any district in the state. They are counting on Mt. Sinai and other nearby hospitals to pick up patients who can no longer receive care at Bethany.

But those hospitals already have ERs that are packed with patients.

"We know the county hospitals are overcrowded. So it's going to be a burden to the community to not have Bethany there," said Rev. Robin Hood, community activist.

Bethany hospital lost \$17 million last year. Administrators concede that the transformation is at least in part an attempt to stop the financial hemorrhaging and provide a new service to West Side residents.

The community hospitals are major academic centers. But in changing to a long-term acute care hospital, we are going to be the first and only of those hospitals on the West Side," said Tony Mitchell, Advocate Health Care.

The state hospital advisory board still needs to sign off on these changes. About 400 people work at Bethany Hospital. The majority of those people will be able to keep their jobs there or apply to work at other Advocate Health Care facilities.

You can see the ABC7 report by clicking on the video icon above. You will need Windows Media Player 9 or higher to view this video. You can get it **FREE** by [clicking here](#). **NOTE: Video clips will only be available for 5-days from the date they were created. ALSO: Video clips will play in a separate window on Mac OS X machines, you may also see a video help screen.**