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Bonner General Health  
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## **PRESS RELEASE 3/17/2023**

### **Discontinuation of Labor & Delivery Services at Bonner General Hospital**

Bonner General Health's commitment to patient safety drives our decisions in the available services we can provide to our community, even with the most challenging choices having to be made. Therefore, Bonner General Health's Board of Directors and Senior Leadership team has made the emotional and difficult decision to discontinue providing Obstetrical services at Bonner General Health for the following reasons:

***Loss of Pediatrician coverage*** - Without pediatrician coverage to manage neonatal resuscitations and perinatal care, it is unsafe and unethical to offer routine Labor and Delivery services; despite our best efforts over months of negotiations. Our inpatient pediatric services will no longer be consistent and reliable in May. BGH has reached out to other active and retired providers in the community requesting assistance with pediatric call coverage with no long-term sustainable solutions. Our low patient volume is insufficient to attract candidates for pediatric hospitalists, and we cannot afford to continue having locum tenens physicians.

**Volumes and changing demographics** – The number of deliveries at BGH has continued to decrease yearly. We delivered 265 babies in 2022 and admitted less than ten pediatric patients for other reasons. There are many reasons, including a nationwide decrease in births, an older population moving to Bonner County, and Kootenai Health having a new, updated unit with Neonatologists and OBs in-house 24/7.

**Idaho's legal and political climate** - Highly respected, talented physicians are leaving. Recruiting replacements will be extraordinarily difficult. In addition, the Idaho Legislature continues to introduce and pass bills that criminalize physicians for medical care nationally recognized as the standard of care. Consequences for Idaho Physicians providing the standard of care may include civil litigation and criminal prosecution, leading to jail time or fines.



"We have made every effort to avoid eliminating these services," stated Ford Elsaesser, Bonner General Health's Board President. "We hoped to be the exception, but our challenges are impossible to overcome now."

**Moving Forward** - Patient safety comes first, which is at the center of this decision. We will continue to provide gynecological services at Sandpoint Women's Health, including surgical services, preventative and wellness exams, and family planning. We will also collaborate with Kootenai Health to provide OB care in our community.

- Sandpoint Women's Health will not be accepting new OB patients effective immediately. A referral list is available for patients at [bonnergeneral.org](http://bonnergeneral.org).
- Bonner General Health is making all attempts to continue deliveries here at the hospital through May 19<sup>th</sup>. However, our ability to provide service is dependent on staffing. All updates will be communicated as quickly as possible if this date changes.
- The BGH team will coordinate care for Sandpoint Women's Health OB patients on-on-one scheduled to deliver in May and after to coordinate the transition of care.
- Lastly, thank you all for the decades of partnership and for entrusting your care with our outstanding Obstetricians and Labor & Delivery staff on our team.

The closure of obstetrics will not be an easy transition for our Bonner General Health teams or our community and surrounding area.

For all additional inquiries, please visit <https://bonnergeneral.org/services/maternity/>