

Enhancing Transitional Care Through Swing Bed Utilization at UMH Sparrow Clinton Hospital

Project Overview

The Michigan Center for Rural Health (MCRH) is committed to supporting Michigan's Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) in strengthening their transitional care (TC) programs through improved swing bed utilization. In late 2021, UMH Sparrow Clinton Hospital (formerly Sparrow Clinton Hospital) partnered with MCRH and Allevant Solutions, L.L.C. to enhance their swing bed program. This initiative was funded through MCRH Federal Flex Funds.

The project's goals were to increase swing bed utilization, expand clinical and service capabilities, improve patient outcomes, and improve both patient and staff satisfaction. Allevant Solutions provided a comprehensive support framework that included project management, clinical education, reference materials, a dedicated database, just-in-time assistance, education on transitional care for acute care hospitals (ACHs), and access to MENDS® health and wellness content.

UMH Sparrow's Clinical Nurse Manager for Med/Surg and Special Care served as the local Project Manager (PM), coordinating implementation efforts in collaboration with the hospital's lead Social Worker (SW). Early planning sessions between the PM and SW evolved into more advanced program development and refinement. The project also focused on developing marketing materials, enhancing the hospital's website, and strengthening relationships with tertiary hospitals—particularly around increasing awareness of the types of patients appropriate for transitional care and current bed availability.

Patients and staff were introduced to the MENDS® Health and Wellness model, which supports increased health literacy and encourages healthy behaviors.

Key Benefits of Transitional Care at UMH Sparrow Clinton:

- Patients remain close to home, which is linked to better outcomes
- Average lengths of stay are significantly shorter than in traditional nursing homes
- Low rates of readmission to acute care
- High percentage of patients return to independent living
- Better nurse-to-patient ratios
- Increased clinical competence among staff



- Stronger on-site medical and ancillary support compared to many nursing home facilities
- Local policy and procedure review and enhancements leading to improved survey readiness
- Increased program awareness by staff, community, and referral partners
- Improved visibility of outcomes through data tracking and reporting

Over the past three years, UMH Sparrow Clinton has made meaningful progress in post-acute care education, training, and practice. While swing bed days averaged around 11 per month before the project, that number increased to 32 days per month in 2024. It's worth noting that higher inpatient census during the spring of 2024 likely limited TC bed availability, and without that constraint, the numbers would have been higher.

Looking ahead, continued improvement is expected as the system capitalizes on opportunities to expand post-acute care. Strategically, this will reduce long-stay inpatient days and avoid related costs at tertiary hospitals—ultimately boosting system-wide financial performance.

Conclusion

The partnership between UMH Sparrow Clinton and Allevant Solutions has proven to be highly successful in advancing transitional care services. As a result of this progress, the hospital has elected to continue its collaboration with Allevant to further develop and refine its swing bed program. Building on this momentum, the UMH system will also expand the initiative to include UMH Sparrow Carson Hospital, a non-CAH rural hospital, demonstrating a strong commitment to post-acute care excellence across its network.

Interested in Learning More?

Hospitals looking to explore transitional care initiatives or seeking guidance on swing bed optimization are encouraged to contact Jeff Nagy at jeff.nagy@affiliate.msu.edu for more information.

