

# How the Closure of Affinity Medical Center Would Harm Patients

## Impact on Emergency Care »»»»

In 2016 alone, Affinity reported 43,229 emergency department visits, and 211,659 from 2012 through 2016 (American Hospital Association data). Those patients would have had to travel up to 17 miles for care at the next four-closest hospitals. Closure would also mean the loss of a \$3 million state-of-the-art emergency department Affinity opened in 2013.

Among the four short-term acute-care hospitals in Stark County, Affinity accounts for 9.5 percent of hospital beds, yet provides more than 18 percent of all ER visits.

## The Opioid Epidemic »»»»

In 2016 and the first half of 2017, Stark County reported 1,748 emergency department and urgent care visits for opioid overdoses—and 163 unintentional opioid deaths. For 2016, Stark County recorded the ninth-highest fatality rate among Ohio's 88 counties.

From 2004 to 2016, Stark County experienced a 603 percent increase in opioid use disorder clients in treatment.

## Flu Season »»»»

Through Dec. 31, Stark County reported 113 flu-related hospitalizations this season compared to 30 for the same period last year, the fifth-highest percentage among Ohio counties. Stark County residents are being hospitalized for the flu at a rate of 30.09 per 100,000-count population (compared to 7.99 last year), the 12th-highest rate among Ohio counties, compared to an average rate of 18.24 percent for the entire state.

## Cardiac Care »»»»

Major cardiac care (including angiography, open heart, telemetry, rehab, and other cardiac services) are a major component of Affinity medical care that would be lost in a closure.

Affinity's own website emphasized the significance of its cardiac services, and implies the threats to community health if lost:

"During an emergency, the closest medical facility that offers timely cardiac intervention is the very best option for heart patients. That's because the sooner the blood supply can be restored, the better the outcome is for the individual. Our heart program is right here in the local community providing comprehensive cardiac care when seconds count. Not only can this lead to better patient outcomes, but it also makes visiting your loved ones easier and more convenient."  
*(Affinity website)*

## A Major Travel Barrier for Seniors and Low-Income Residents »»»»

Medicare patients accounted for 48 percent of Affinity patient discharges (2016 data). Medicaid patients accounted for 21 percent of discharges.

The closure would thus disproportionately harm seniors and low-income residents of western Stark County, those most affected by the limited public transit services in the region. Travel times by public transit to the nearest other acute-care hospitals would take at least 30 minutes, and for some facilities up to 2.5 hours, especially in inclement weather, a particularly alarming time frame for people in need of immediate care.

## Lost Jobs for the Community and Ohio »»»»

More than 800 people could lose their jobs if Affinity is allowed to close—a serious economic impact on them, their families, and the community at a time of lingering economic downturn for all of Ohio. NNU estimates an overall decline of \$260 million in economic output in the event of a closure.



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