



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSC Health, S.C. Dept. of Corrections enter partnership for health care of incarcerated people

CHARLESTON and COLUMBIA, S.C. (April 28, 2021) – MUSC Health, the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) have begun a first-of-its kind partnership to consolidate health care services for incarcerated people within South Carolina.

"This will allow inmates to be treated in a consolidated, safe, secure environment and save taxpayer dollars," SCDC director Bryan Stirling said. "We are grateful for this important partnership."

The agreement establishes a dedicated, secure (prison-standard) hospital wing with about 35 beds for SCDC patients inside MUSC Health Chester Medical Center, instead of sending them to various health care facilities across the state for the treatment of acute conditions, such as appendicitis or pneumonia. Emergency care will still be provided by the hospital closest to the incarcerated person's correctional institution.

Beginning this summer, MUSC Health plans to renovate the Chester facility to ensure that the environment is secure and safe. Renovations will include adding multiple levels of security enhancements throughout the building, such as security doors, windows, cameras and fencing. Costs related to the project are still being finalized. The general timeline for the project includes three to four months for the selection of an architect and design activities and then approximately four months for renovations. The first patients are anticipated in the facility in mid-2022.

"As the state's only comprehensive academic health sciences center, our mission is rooted in serving all citizens to the best of our ability and leading with innovative solutions that positively affect our community," said David J. Cole, M.D., FACS, MUSC president. "A more structured health care delivery system, based on evidence-based processes, allows for greater access to specialists, improved clinical outcomes and reduced costs to the state overall for this very complex population. We look forward to building upon this new foundation with the Department of Corrections in the years to come."

According to a 2018 [research analysis](#) conducted by the Pew Charitable Trusts, “While most care for incarcerated individuals is delivered on-site, some of them periodically need to be hospitalized for acute or specialized care. As is true generally, this treatment is expensive because of the labor-intensive and sophisticated services provided. And hospitalizing someone who is in prison brings added expenses, such as providing secure transportation to and from the hospital and guarding the patient round-the-clock. State officials nationwide are under increasing pressure to contain hospitalization costs while also ensuring the constitutional right to ‘reasonably adequate’ care.”

Rep. Annie McDaniel, 41st District, welcomes the partnership. “This partnership is not only key to the consolidation of quality health care and cost savings for our prison system, it’s also a path forward for better community health in the long term, when individuals rejoin society after serving their time,” she said. “All citizens of this state, incarcerated or not, deserve better access to quality health care. I congratulate MUSC and SCDC for this new model and look forward to seeing its outcome in the long run.”

Currently, when incarcerated people in South Carolina need hospitalization, they are taken to one of many local hospitals throughout the state. An average of 25 inmates are hospitalized daily. Working 12-hour shifts, at least two officers must at all times accompany each inmate. It requires 255 employees to staff hospital duty 24 hours a day, year-round. The newly renovated facility would return about 200 employees to correctional institutions statewide.

Sen. Mike Fanning, 17th District, applauded the partnership. “I’m confident that MUSC and the Department of Corrections are taking everything into account with this new project that will keep our hospital and region strong and vibrant: most importantly, the safety and well-being of the Chester community, the individuals who will work at the facility and the patients who will need to be treated there.”

In general, anticipated savings for the SCDC related to the partnership come from a combination of security efficiencies and reduced overtime for corrections officers as well as exploration of other ways to leverage MUSC Health’s broad network of expertise, health care providers and collective buying power. For example, the partners plan to leverage further existing telehealth partnerships within the SCDC.

“This partnership is a win-win-win and provides community benefits in several domains,” said Patrick J. Cawley, M.D., MUSC Health system CEO and vice president of Health Affairs, University. “SCDC patients will benefit from better continuity of care. The community will be safer due to the decreased need for patient transport around the state and the state is able to realize efficiencies and innovations that will lead to significant cost savings in the future.”

MUSC Contact: Heather Woolwine / woolwinh@musc.edu / 843-792-7669

SCDC Contact: Chrysti Shain / Shain.Chrysti@doc.sc.gov / 803-413-8206

###

About MUSC Health

As the clinical health system of the Medical University of South Carolina, MUSC Health is dedicated to delivering the highest quality patient care available while training generations of competent, compassionate health care providers to serve the people of South Carolina and beyond. Comprising some 1,600 beds, more than 100 outreach sites, the MUSC College of Medicine, the physicians' practice plan and nearly 275 telehealth locations, MUSC Health owns and operates eight hospitals situated in Charleston, Chester, Florence, Lancaster and Marion counties. In 2020, for the sixth consecutive year, U.S. News & World Report named MUSC Health the No. 1 hospital in South Carolina. To learn more about clinical patient services, visit muschealth.org.

MUSC and its affiliates have collective annual budgets of \$3.2 billion. The more than 17,000 MUSC team members include world-class faculty, physicians, specialty providers and scientists who deliver groundbreaking education, research, technology and patient care.

About S.C. Dept. of Corrections

The S.C. Department of Corrections is responsible for housing more than 15,000 inmates in 21 state prisons. The department employs about 4,500 people and reports to the governor. Since 2019, the department has had the lowest three-year return-to-prison recidivism rate in the nation.