



## St. Mary's to consolidate birthing services into Athens hospital

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Lavonia, Ga.** – Like all hospitals across Georgia, St. Mary's Sacred Heart continues to face significant challenges. To ensure the sustainability of St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital and address these increasing challenges, St. Mary's Health Care System will be consolidating labor and delivery services into one location at St. Mary's Hospital in Athens. St. Mary's Medical Group will also discontinue care at Clear Creek OB/GYN in Lavonia. This transition will take effect in late October.

This decision follows an extensive 18-month discernment process that included intensive efforts to recruit additional physicians, create new partnerships, and pursue incremental funding sources. Changing demographics in our region, physician recruitment challenges, increasing outmigration for labor and delivery services, and recent Congressional cuts to Medicaid solidified this decision.

St. Mary's takes great pride in and is thankful for the exceptional care provided in the Mother-Baby Unit. The dedication of our staff, physicians and the meaningful role this unit has played over the years has been outstanding. Our exhaustive discernment showed this difficult decision was necessary to continue serving our community and its evolving care needs. We remain committed to supporting patients and colleagues through the transition.

Patients have been contacted and will be supported with a smooth and safe transition of care to St. Mary's Hospital in Athens or other area facilities and providers. St. Mary's Family Birth Center in Athens includes a Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, a c-section suite, lactation education and support, and a facility that allows mothers to labor, deliver, recover and receive post-partum care in one room.

Sacred Heart Hospital's Emergency Department is led by board-certified emergency medicine physicians and is fully capable of evaluating, stabilizing and treating all patients, including those seeking gynecological and obstetrical care. As in all emergency departments, if a higher level of care is needed, the patient would be transferred by ambulance to the nearest appropriate facility.

St. Mary's is committed to supporting impacted staff and colleagues who wish to continue their employment with St. Mary's in finding appropriate positions.