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Making room

PMC interested in housing local VA clinic in west campus building

POCATELLO — Officials with Portneuf Medical Center have expressed interest in providing space at its west campus to the veterans outpatient clinic on Hospital Way if the clinic decides to change locations in the future. PMC's west facilities will become vacant once the hospital completes an ongoing consolidation of its east and west campuses.

Andrew Kalinen, an administrative officer with the Veterans Affairs Community Clinics, said the Pocatello VA outpatient clinic has expanded its services and received a growing number of patients during the past two years. "All this comes to running out of room because we have more patients and more staff," he said.

The outpatient clinic had approximately 4,695 individual patients last year, up from 4,325 in 2008. The clinic provides services in primary care, social work, mental health and women's health.

Kalinen said women's health services were added during the past year while there has been a significant uptick in the number of mental health patients. He said mental health services have expanded largely due to Operation Enduring Iraqi Freedom, a program at the clinic that focuses on assisting veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

While proposals have yet to be drafted, Kalinen said there has been talks of moving the Pocatello clinic elsewhere.

Brad Huerta, a PMC spokesman, said his hospital has had a few conversations with a local veterans advocate. "They approached us, asking if we have space, and we said, 'We do have space available (at the west campus), and we'd like to see that happen,'" he said. "There's a lot of (potential for) synergy there."

Huerta said one major advantage of being at the west campus is that it is adjacent to Idaho State University, which he notes has a program specifically geared for veterans.

"The fact that we have clinical space available on the ISU campus is a great dove-tailing of agendas," he said. "Right now, we're just sitting back waiting. We did invite some VA representatives to come tour the campus whenever they're ready."

Though there is no exact timeline on when the outpatient clinic will plan to switch locations, Kalinen said he hopes to identify a new place soon.