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St. Benedicts transferring home health to St. Luke's

St. Benedicts Family Medical Center in Jerome is transferring its home health services to St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center.

St. Benedicts and the Twin Falls hospital signed a letter of intent last week to transfer St. Benedicts' home health services to St. Luke's by Sept. 1, Jerome hospital officials announced on Monday.

St. Benedicts said the transition process will be seamless for current patients and providers, which is described in the letter. The hospital's home health services currently works with about 40 patients.

"Our first obligation is to our patients and staff," Alan Stevenson, chief executive officer at St. Benedicts, said in a statement. "St. Benedicts is a critical access facility and is examining all lines of services currently offered. A mission based discernment process evaluating home health services began back in February 2009. After careful review, the decision was made to transfer home health services. Partnering with St. Luke's to deliver home health services is a means of offering continued excellent home health services to our patients."

The two hospitals plan to communicate to ensure a smooth transition for patients, physicians and staff.

John Groesbeck, chief operating officer and chief financial officer for St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center, said more planning and collaboration is needed for details like the staffing of the two organizations.

"This is a great opportunity for us to take what has historically been two competing organizations and create a great regional partnership," he said.

St. Benedicts said that collaborative discussions will continue that look at shared services in information technology and radiology.

St. Benedicts Family Medical Center is an affiliate of Essentia Community Hospitals and Clinics, of New Brighton, Minn., a nonprofit, mission-based health care system with three rural hospitals in Idaho.