

'Jump Start a Heart' Engages the Community to Improve Patient Outcomes

About West Feliciana Hospital



West Feliciana Hospital is a rural critical access hospital in St. Francisville, a traditionally

underserved area of southeast Louisiana. With a population of about 1,500 residents and a parish population of just over 12,000, the facility operates with limited specialty resources. There is no intensive care unit (ICU), no catheterization laboratory and minimal cardiology services. This presents significant challenges when treating time-sensitive cardiac emergencies.

'Jump Start a Heart' Enlists Community Help to Improve Cardiac Care

Despite constrained resources, West Feliciana Hospital has shown how rural health systems can transform cardiac care and patient outcomes by updating emergency response processes by leveraging community involvement and implementing evidence-based standards. The hospital has developed a cardiac readiness strategy built around the principles of expanding early intervention and streamlining in-hospital evaluation.

To address long EMS travel times and to better serve patients living in remote areas, West Feliciana Hospital launched a parish-wide early response program called Jump Start a Heart. Through grant funding, the hospital has installed automated external defibrillators around the

community and trained citizens how to operate them. More than 200 parish residents have enrolled in the program, dramatically increasing the community's ability to administer lifesaving care before EMS can arrive.

Once patients arrive at the hospital, staff focus on implementing the chest pain program, which includes rapid identification, stabilization and transfer to the closest facility that can manage advanced cardiac treatment and the patient's unique care needs. The hospital has achieved national chest pain center accreditation, becoming the first critical access hospital in Louisiana to do so, and one of the first in the nation.

Program Results

This program focuses on three important metrics:

- ▶ A complete transfer within 30 minutes for heart attack patients
- ▶ An EKG performed within 10 minutes of arrival
- ▶ Troponin test results within 60 minutes – a key diagnostic tool for assessing heart damage

In 2025, the hospital has met the last two standards in 95% of eligible patients. Additionally, they consistently transfer heart attack patients within 30 minutes — a notably shorter wait time compared to the national median of 60 minutes for similarly situated hospitals.

West Feliciana Hospital's approach demonstrates how small, resource-limited facilities can deliver high-quality cardiac care when a few minutes can make a lifesaving difference.