

Weeks before Randolph County's first confirmed case of COVID-19, Memorial Hospital, Chester's Emergency Management Team was meeting frequently to assess the hospital's preparedness in terms of supplies, capacity and capability.

By the time the first patient tested positive on March 29, Memorial Hospital, Chester was ready. The hospital had already implemented screening protocols and visitor restrictions.

Georgia Allen, the hospital's emergency preparedness coordinator, was instrumental in the planning. She represents the hospital in two critical alliances:

- Randolph County Community Group Health and Medical Division
- HOPE (Healthcare Organizations Preparing for Emergencies) Region 4 Coalition

In a normal year, both groups meet quarterly or monthly. In the wake of COVID-19, they began communicating weekly, then daily. Coordinating with these alliances provided insights that led Memorial to reorganize operations to protect patients and staff.

For example, temporarily relocating the hospital's chemotherapy department accomplished two goals: A new isolation area for COVID-19 patients and seamless treatment for cancer patients without mixing them with other patients. Through a HOPE Coalition grant, Memorial was also able to procure vital supplies such as a decontamination and containment tent, a transfer ventilator, and portable hand-washing stations.

"The tools, equipment, education, training and constant communication with other organizations helps make us strong against this fight," Memorial staff posted on the hospital's blog. "By working together, we will all get through this."

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