

# Axel & Associates, Inc.

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MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

September 26, 2025

Mr. Mike Constantino  
c/o Illinois Health Facilities and  
Services Review Board  
525 West Jefferson  
Springfield, IL 62761



RE: COE E-008-25  
Alexian Brothers Medical Center

Dear Mike:

Please accept this letter in response to the questions relating to the above-referenced Certificate of Exemption application that you provided on September 18, 2025.

1. How is Ascension addressing the challenges Hispanic families face in accessing obstetric care? Consider language, cultural competency, transportation, and immigration status concerns.

Ascension Illinois offers free language interpretation at all our hospitals and Ascension Medical Group sites of care. On the phone, in the hospital or in the doctor's office, we offer medical interpretation in a wide variety of languages, including Spanish. In addition, many of our providers, nurses and support staff speak fluent Spanish and are able to communicate directly with patients in their preferred language.

We maintain positive and collaborative relationships with the FQHCs in the communities we serve and are attuned to the needs of all patients. We have received letter(s) of support from our FQHC partners in regards to the transition of inpatient obstetrics from Ascension Alexian Brothers to Ascension Saint Alexius Women and Children's Hospital. We work closely with our FQHC partners to address patient needs and ensure access to quality care at our Ascension Illinois hospitals and with Board approval, uninterrupted access to dedicated inpatient obstetric care at Ascension Saint Alexius Women and Children's Hospital.

Additionally, in recognition of the varied challenges families may have in accessing care, we are proud to bring together various providers and community organizations across the northwest suburbs at our Ascension Community Resource Center in Hanover Park. The Center houses several agencies in donated space including Greater Family Health FQHC, Community and Economic Development Association (CEDA) of Cook County which also provide WIC nutrition services, the Access to Justice and Legal Support program which provides legal services and information for the immigrant community including weekly immigration clinics, Partners for Our Communities which provides immigration support services, health, wellness and social service resources. And, we are also welcoming

Hopeful Beginnings this fall to provide perinatal mental health services for expectant moms.

Lastly, independently and in partnership with Hanover Township, Ascension Illinois provides numerous health screenings and health education offerings including flu shots, mobile mammography, prostate screenings, mental health resources and more throughout the year.

Since October 2024, Ascension Illinois and our partnering agencies have collectively served over 8,400 individuals.

2. Does Ascension provide culturally competent care, such as bilingual staff and culturally sensitive practices around childbirth?

Yes, many of our providers and support staff speak fluent Spanish and are able to communicate directly with patients in their preferred language and with an understanding of the cultural nuances associated around pregnancy and childbirth. We are also in full compliance with provisions of state law regarding language requirements and culturally competent care.

3. What methods is Ascension using to communicate changes to the Hispanic community?

Ascension Illinois is preparing a detailed communications plan to share the news of this change widely in the communities we serve, should this transition be approved by the Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board. All communications will be prepared using the most commonly spoken languages in our area, including Spanish and Polish. Tactics planned include a direct mail campaign to homes in our primary service area in multiple languages, communication directly with our OB physicians, posters and flyer handouts for our OB offices, partnership with community organizations and churches serving the local Hispanic community, participation in various upcoming community health events and various forms of targeted notification through Spanish and Polish media. Ascension Illinois will also post notice of the change to our own website and push out information through our social media channels.

4. What is the reasoning for no longer accepting insurance from certain providers? Are these changes affecting Medicaid or other public insurance plans that many low-income and Hispanic families rely on?

Ascension Illinois hospitals have not terminated any contracts with any insurance providers that would impact access to women's healthcare for any members of the community.

Health systems and insurance providers routinely engage in contract rate negotiations that require advance notification to plan participants indicating the potential termination of contracts and the possibility of going out of network if an agreement is not reached between

the parties. This year, Ascension Illinois was engaged in contract negotiations with United Healthcare that necessitated communication to plan members about the potential of contract termination should an agreement not be reached. Both parties mailed letters to plan participants. **Ascension Illinois clearly informed patients that if an agreement with United Healthcare was reached, nothing would change for United Healthcare members including their access to Ascension Illinois hospitals, clinic services and doctors. Those discussions concluded with an agreement in place and no changes for plan participants.**

5. How were patients notified of these changes, and what recourse is available for those who lose their in-network coverage?

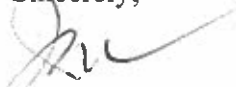
Ascension Illinois hospitals have not terminated any contracts with any insurance providers that would impact access to women's healthcare for any members of the community.

6. Are there protections in place to ensure that pregnant individuals in labor will still be covered in a hospital emergency department, even if their plan is no longer in-network?

First and foremost, no one will be turned away. Emergency deliveries will continue at Ascension Alexian Brothers consistent with the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) state and federal requirements. We will also provide emergency transportation services for patients best served by the Level III NICU at Ascension Saint Alexius Women and Children's Hospital. Patients will not incur any costs associated with transfers to Ascension Saint Alexius Women and Children's Hospital for a higher level of care. We are working with our EMS providers and patient transport service to ensure a smooth process for such transfers.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues, and should you require any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jacob M. Axel  
President

cc J. Roknich