



## St. Joseph's Hospital and LICIL join forces to improve healthcare for people with disabilities

Bethpage, New York: St. Joseph's Hospital has launched a new initiative that will change the healthcare experience for its patients with disabilities. In partnership with the Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc. (LICIL), a not-for-profit advocacy organization based in nearby Levittown, and the PULSE of NY Patient Safety Advisory Council, St. Joseph's has embraced a treatment model that emphasizes patient dignity and gives priority to specific disability needs like safe lifting, adaptive devices and accessible parking.

Under the initiative, staff training is now in place to teach and reinforce the critical importance of frequent position changes and safe techniques for lifting and transfers for patients with significant mobility impairments. This training piece is further enhanced by the development of a policy requiring that any and all patients over 35 lbs. and unable to move on their own will be lifted using specialized lift equipment available on every unit. Safe lifting and transfer priorities are also advanced by the addition of 150 slings (up from eight or nine), several standing lifts and easy-grip sheets.

For those patients with disabilities unable to use traditional items usually found in hospital settings, St. Joseph's now makes available side-rail mounted drinking cups donated by Maddak. Also available upon patient request are speaker telephones and adapted call bells. Wherever possible, patients with disabilities will be assigned to private rooms in order to allow space for mobility and other disability-related equipment.

As a means to ensure that patients with disabilities are receiving the quality of care provided for in this range of new policies and procedures, a member of the Hospital Leadership Team will be required to communicate daily with every patient and to resolve with expedience any care-related issues. Additionally, Patient's charts and personal equipment will be conspicuously marked with the "Helping Hands" logo. Developed by St. Joseph's staff, the logo's purpose is two-fold: To alert medical personnel to the presence of specific disability-related issues; and to identify mobility aids such as wheelchairs and crutches as patient-owned items to be handled with extreme care and not to be handled or removed without permission from that owner.

For those with disabilities accessing the facility by car, an "enhanced" parking policy has been implemented so that disabled parking permit holders may park in any spaces on the hospital property, including those reserved for physicians.

"We are extremely pleased with the steps taken by St. Joseph's to bring the very specific, and historically overlooked needs of patients with pre-existing disabilities into the forefront of its healthcare policy agenda," said Patricia Moore, Executive Director of the Long Island Center for Independent Living, Inc. (LICIL). "It is our hope," adds Ms. Moore, "that other health care systems will take notice and follow the lead of St. Joseph's."

St. Joseph's Hospital is a 203-bed, community hospital that provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient medical, critical care and surgical services. Its Emergency Department cares for more than 37,000 patients a year. Other vital services include an Ambulatory Surgery Unit, The Center for Sleep Medicine, hyperbaric medicine and wound healing, a Balance Center, an endoscopy unit, a full scope of outpatient radiology services, including a new CT scanner, MRI, nuclear camera and a full state-of-the-art PACS system. Additional information about St. Joseph's may be found at [www.stjosephhospitalny.org](http://www.stjosephhospitalny.org).

LICIL is a 501(c)3, non-residential, cross-disability advocacy organization with more than 30 years experience in direct services to people with disabilities and their families. The Center is committed to shaping public policy that promotes full community access and seamless integration of people with disabilities into the fabric of society. Further information about LICIL programs and services may be found at [www.LICIL.net](http://www.LICIL.net).