

St. Luke's Women & Children's unit gets Massachusetts Department of Public Health nod on innovative new model

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has approved a new room model at the Robert F. Stoico/FIRSTFED Women and Children's Pavilion at St. Luke's, making the hospital among the first in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to offer Level II Couplet Care to mothers and newborns, Southcoast Health officials announced.

Starting in the summer of 2022, infants with acute conditions after delivery will be able to bond with their mothers in a private room equipped with centralized monitoring and located in close proximity to the on-call neonatologist's office, rather than be restricted to a clinical nursery housing multiple newborns, as has historically been the case for most hospitals.



“During this most recent round of major renovations at the Stoico/FIRSTFED Women and Children’s Pavilion at St. Luke’s, our entire team has been looking forward to moments like these as we strengthen what is, along with Charlton Memorial, already the best possible starting point for the mom and child journey,” said Dr. Ray Kruger, Southcoast Health President and CEO. “The nurses, providers, and staff have earned a place on Newsweek’s Best Maternity Care Hospitals list for consecutive years, and we continue to invest in their efforts, on behalf of both our patients and the employees who serve them.”

The new Neonatal Couplet Care Room will be part of the St. Luke’s 5,866-square-foot Level II Special Care Nursery, with additional rooms planned in subsequent phases of the renovation, designed by Lavallee Brensinger Architects. The new Level II Special Care Nursery will also include seven bassinet rooms, as well as an Airborne Infection Isolation Couplet Room, for a total of eight rooms.

The St. Luke’s Level II Special Care Nursery is licensed for the following:

- Providing neonatal resuscitation at required deliveries
- Stabilizing and caring for infants born 32 to 37 weeks
- Stabilizing newborn infants who are ill and require a higher level of care
- Stabilizing infants born before 32 weeks of gestation and weighing less than 3.3 pounds until transfer to a neonatal intensive care facility (NICU)

“When it comes to couplet care in a Level II Special Care setting, with mom and baby being able to stay together, we’ll see newborns heal more quickly, better breastfeeding rates, and improved neurodevelopmental outcomes,” said Kim Pina, RN, Executive Director of the Stoico/FIRSTFED Women and Children’s Pavilion at St. Luke’s.

“Parents will be better prepared for discharge, and the

overall patient experience will be sustainable at the highest possible level, with our skilled nurses having everything they need, including top-tier technology, in one place, to provide exceptional care in a private setting,” Pina added. “We are thrilled to be an early adopter of this model, and to be able to offer it to the moms and babies who need it most. Receiving design approval from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health so close to Mother’s Day makes it even more exciting, and we are so grateful.”

Philip Oliveira, Southcoast Health Vice President of Support Services, agreed.

“All of our postpartum rooms at St. Luke’s will now be equipped for couplet care, and our plan is to add additional Level II Special Care couplet care rooms as we continue to provide world-class care, close to home,” Oliveira said. “This has allowed us to be one of the first hospitals to offer this service to our patients. Southcoast’s design and construction teams were happy to collaborate with Lavallee Brensinger and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to create this beautiful space for our community.”