



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Pediatric Sleep Center opens at Studer Family Children's Hospital**

**Pensacola, Fla.** (June 26, 2020) – Children with sleep disorders now have access to diagnostic testing and a comprehensive team of caregivers onsite at Northwest Florida's only children's hospital, thanks to the opening of a pediatric sleep center on the campus of the Studer Family Children's Hospital at Ascension Sacred Heart in Pensacola.

"Sleep affects every aspect of a child's health, daily functioning and well-being, and approximately 30 to 40 percent of all children have problems sleeping," said Gulnur Com, MD, medical director of pediatric pulmonology and sleep medicine for the Children's Hospital. "The way a child feels throughout the day reflects how well the child slept the night before because sleep restores the body both physically and mentally. Sleep disorders may lead to poor attention span, hyperactivity, academic difficulty, behavior problems and contribute to obesity and other chronic problems."

Children who experience snoring, pauses in breathing during sleep, restless sleep, tiredness during the day, or moving their legs constantly at night may have a sleep disorder. Other potential symptoms of a sleep disorder include problems learning, behavior problems, bedwetting, headaches, problems falling asleep or staying asleep, sleepwalking and talking, and bedtime resistance.

Children more likely to suffer from sleep issues include those with respiratory issues and respiratory technology dependency, craniofacial and airway problems, and chronic illnesses such as asthma, sickle cell disease, uncontrolled diabetes, chronic kidney disorder, uncontrolled hypertension, central nervous system disorders, enuresis, genetic disorders, neuromuscular conditions, ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders. Poor sleep and sleep-disordered breathing problems may have a negative impact on the health of children with chronic illness.

As Northwest Florida's only children's hospital, the pediatric sleep medicine team includes board-certified sleep medicine specialist and pediatric pulmonologist Gulnur Com, MD, pediatric pulmonologist Madhuri Penugonda, MD, pediatric otolaryngologist James Coticchia, MD, pediatric craniofacial surgeon Aaron Wallender, MD, DDS, nurse practitioner Sonia Smith, specialty nurses, respiratory therapists, registered dietitians and social workers, all specially trained in care for children. The Children's Hospital team also collaborates with providers in psychiatry, psychology, obesity medicine, adolescent medicine and behavioral pediatrics. Sleep disorders treated by the sleep medicine team include sleep disordered breathing, central apnea, behavioral sleep disorders, difficulty both falling and staying asleep, circadian rhythm disorders, excessive daytime sleepiness, narcolepsy, periodic limb movement disorder and restless leg syndrome.

The new 3,500 square-foot space includes four suites and new couches that fold-down to a twin-sized bed for a child's parent to use overnight. The new sleep center offers weekend hours for the convenience of families, with testing done from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Sunday through Friday. The pediatric

sleep center is located in the DePaul Building of Ascension Sacred Heart's Pensacola campus, 5147 N. Ninth Ave.

For information about sleep studies at the pediatric sleep center, call 850-416-2190.

Prior to the child's sleep study, parents and providers have the option of a consultation with a Children's Hospital sleep medicine provider. To reach the pediatric pulmonology and sleep medicine office, please call 850-416-1110.

### **About Ascension Sacred Heart**

In Florida, Ascension operates Ascension Sacred Heart based in Pensacola and Ascension St. Vincent's based in Jacksonville. Together, Ascension Florida operates seven hospitals and more than 100 other sites of care, and employs more than 11,000 associates. Across the region, Ascension Sacred Heart and Ascension St. Vincent's have served North Florida communities for more than 145 years. In fiscal year 2019, they provided nearly \$180 million in community benefit and care of persons living in poverty. Ascension ([www.ascension.org](http://www.ascension.org)) is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As one of the leading non-profit and Catholic health systems in the U.S., Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. Ascension includes approximately 150,000 associates and 40,000 aligned providers. The national health system operates more than 2,600 sites of care – including 150 hospitals and more than 50 senior living facilities – in 20 states and the District of Columbia. For more information on Ascension Sacred Heart, visit <https://healthcare.ascension.org>.

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