



For Immediate Release [Watertown, NY] — [May 19, 2026]

North Star Health Alliance and North Country Family Health Center Collaborate to Support Pediatric Care Access Across the North Country

As part of North Star Health Alliance's (NSHA) ongoing restructuring and operational stabilization efforts, NSHA has made the difficult decision to close the North Star Pediatrics practice located at 1571 Washington Street in Watertown, effective June 30, 2026.

To help ensure families in the Watertown area continue to have access to pediatric care, NSHA and North Country Family Health Center (NoCo) are collaborating to support and strengthen pediatric care services for families across Jefferson County and the surrounding region.

As part of this collaborative transition plan, Pediatricians Dr. Josiree Ochotorena and Dr. Fernando Ongkingco will begin caring for patients at the Carthage Pediatric Clinic in Carthage. They will join Pediatrician Dr. Joseph Gianfagna, Physician Assistants Brittany Schwartz and Jennelle Walton, and Nurse Practitioner Sarah Weir.

NoCo is pleased to welcome Pediatrician Dr. John Devine and Physician Assistant Robin Frost to its Jefferson County pediatric care team, both providers previously cared for patients at North Star Pediatrics. They will join pediatricians Dr. Diane Keating-Jones and Dr. Beth Ann Jayne, who is board-certified in both pediatrics and internal medicine, as well as Nurse Practitioner Catherine Veley, at NoCo's Main Campus location in Watertown.

This collaboration allows families to continue care with providers they know and trust while also increasing appointment availability and strengthening long-term pediatric care access throughout the region.

"As we continue working through our restructuring and stabilization efforts, our priority remains ensuring patients and families continue receiving excellent care with as little disruption as possible," said Interim Chief Executive Officer Andy Manzer. "This joint initiative is a positive example of healthcare organizations working together to strengthen services, maintain access to care, and support the long-term healthcare needs of our communities."

"Our commitment to ensuring that every child in our community has continued access to exceptional pediatric care close to home remains steadfast," said Joey Marie Horton, Chief Executive Officer of North Country Family Health Center. "We are grateful for the opportunity to

collaborate with North Star Health Alliance to ensure families continue receiving high-quality pediatric services in Watertown."

Patients and families will continue receiving direct communication throughout the transition process, including a mailed letter outlining provider location updates, scheduling options, and available care coordination support to help ensure continuity of care.

The organizations emphasized that the collaboration reflects a shared commitment to access to high-quality pediatric care while supporting long-term sustainability and expanded service availability in the North Country.

NSHA Pediatric Services

Patients who wish to follow Dr. Ochotorena or Dr. Ongkingko, or establish care with any of the available providers, are encouraged to call the Carthage Pediatric Clinic (315-493-4187), located at 117 N Mechanic St, Carthage, NY. The clinic welcomes all patients and accepts all insurance types. Clinic hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Additionally, families with children enrolled in the Carthage Middle & High or Beaver River School Districts are welcome to utilize the School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) in those locations for both primary and urgent pediatric care needs. All SBHC services are provided with no out-of-pocket costs.

NoCo Pediatric Services

Patients who prefer to seek pediatric care in Watertown are encouraged to establish care with NoCo at its Main Campus, located at 238 Arsenal Street, Watertown, NY. NoCo accepts all patients regardless of insurance status and offers a sliding fee scale discount for families below 200% of poverty guidelines. Additionally, families with children enrolled in the Watertown City or South Jefferson School Districts are welcome to utilize NoCo's six School-Based Health Centers located in those Districts for both primary and urgent pediatric care needs. All SBHC services are provided with no out-of-pocket costs.

To further improve accessibility, NoCo offers early morning and evening appointments Tuesday through Thursday at its Main Campus in Watertown. Beginning in August, Dr. Devine will also provide dedicated early morning and evening pediatric appointment availability as well. Same-day, walk-in, and scheduled pediatric appointments will all be available during those hours.

North Star Pediatrics patients interested in becoming patients of NoCo are encouraged to text "North Star" to 315-782-9450. NoCo staff will assist families with establishing care and scheduling appointments.

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