

Are Psychiatric Patients Languishing in Your Emergency Department?

Discover Proactive Solutions, with Measurable Results, to Managing the Influx of Psychiatric Patients.

Prepared by Horizon Health Behavioral Health Services



The Emergency Room Dilemma

As community mental health services and psychiatric hospital beds are reduced or eliminated, patients with critical psychiatric needs are swamping emergency rooms. This influx of psychiatric patients has created a community healthcare crisis, and alarm is intensifying among healthcare professionals and hospital administrators throughout the country.

Psychiatric patients sometimes linger for days in emergency rooms while increasing the risk of harm to themselves, other patients, and staff; stretching resources at the expense of sacrificing quality care. Options appear limited as staff express fear of being harmed and frustration mounts as the struggle with how to best address the patients' needs and discharge to suitable care intensifies. Prolonged boarding times can lead to overcrowding, compromise the care for all patients, and perpetuate intolerance from normally compassionate and caring hospital staff.

The Emergency Room Dilemma (cont'd)

Are you experiencing these issues with psychiatric patients in your emergency room?

- Extended lengths of stay
- Aggression and violence
- Disruption of the overall milieu
- Frequent re-admissions
- Limited financial resources and community/family support

Are your staff facing some of these common concerns as they find themselves confronted with psychiatric patients?

- Injury, or fear of injury
- Threats and intimidation
- Feeling stressed and fatigued
- Lack of effective risk assessment
- Frustrated treatment teams and inconsistent responses
- Insufficient training in anger de-escalation and aggression prevention

Questions are building as hospital administrators and healthcare professionals grapple to find solutions. Recognizing that services in the community won't just materialize, answers appear elusive at best.

The adverse consequences of a hospital not being able to effectively manage psychiatric patients in their emergency department are staggering and far-reaching. The problems they are facing today will only grow more acute, and absent a cohesive plan, place the hospital in a very precarious situation.

The Horizon Relief Plan

With years of experience assisting and operating behavioral health programs within acute care hospitals all over the country, Horizon Health has learned what works and what doesn't. Evidence has shown that through careful and targeted assessment, planning, training, and organizing, you can have direction and relief in your emergency room.

Psychiatric patients come to your emergency room with critical emergent needs. These needs are often expressed through co-morbid behaviors such as anger, aggression, anxiety, psychosis, and depression, or medical issues and somatic complaints. The primary objective of the emergency room is to stabilize the immediate crisis and transfer the patient to the most appropriate and available care. This sounds simple enough, but practical application requires innovation, direction, and strategic implementation.

The Horizon Relief Plan (cont'd)

Horizon begins by facilitating a thorough assessment of your concerns, facility, community resources, staffing patterns, training, policies, protocols, assessment process, and treatment regimens. We work with you to discover solutions specific to your organization. Horizon will provide direction, strategies and solutions needed to best equip your staff to:

- Implement formal initial and ongoing risk assessments
- Establish treatment protocols
- De-escalate potentially dangerous patients and situations
- Secure a safer environment
- Improve overall patient care
- Reduce lengths of stay

For example, Horizon's SECURE™ crisis prevention training program provides staff with the necessary tools to assess problems and intervene effectively, while preserving patients' safety, rights and dignity. Don't let the absence of a structured program for processing and disposition of psychiatric patients presenting in your emergency department compromise the safety of your staff, and the treatment your patients receive.

About Horizon Health

As a leading behavioral services management company, we partner with hospitals seeking to optimize the delivery of behavioral health services. We bring our clinical, operational, and financial expertise to implement behavioral health programs that result in patient improvement and satisfaction.

If you are interested in learning high-quality ways to launch a new behavioral health program or how to improve your existing one, contact us today to start your facility assessment.



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