

Mental Illness in the Family: Part 3 Considering Hospital Care

Most people with mental illnesses who receive mental health care get that care in their community – at a doctor’s office, community mental health center, support group or other setting. Receiving care near where they work or live helps these individuals pursue full, productive lives.

There are times, however, when hospital care may be necessary for people in crisis. Of the 52 million people in the United States in 1994 who had a mental health disorder, only 0.5% of them were hospitalized in a 24-hour or residential care setting (CMHS, 2000).

Deciding whether hospitalization or in-patient care is appropriate can be difficult for individuals and families and should be considered with the consultation of a mental health professional. If in-patient care becomes necessary, this pamphlet will help you ensure the best care possible.

Questions to ask.

Consider before admission:

- Have you or the individual in need been professionally evaluated? By whom? Do you understand the diagnosis?
- If you or the individual have not been evaluated, why are you seeking admission?
 - a) The person’s safety, or the safety of others?
 - b) A doctor’s recommendation?
 - c) What symptoms the individual is exhibiting cause concern?
- Do you or the individual have an advance directive in place? What does it say About in-patient care?

As the hospital/treatment center at check in:

- Does your facility treat patients only for this specific diagnosis?
- If the patient has other health or emotional problems will he/she receive treatment for these problems also?
- Does your facility require tests when admitted? If so, what are they?
- Who will perform these tests?
- Who will evaluate the patient when he/she is admitted?
- What are the person’s qualifications/title?
- Will the individual be seen by this professional on a regular basis?
- When will the initial evaluation take place?
- Is there a consumer advocate we can contact in case of complaints or grievances?

What You Need to Know...



Financial and insurance issues:

- Does the hospital accept our insurance? If not, what are the alternatives? If it does, what is covered?
- Can coverage be reviewed with a member of the staff?
- Are there separate charges for physicians, therapists or caretakers? What are these charges?
- How are fees assessed?
- When will billing occur?
- If insurance only covers part of the cost, what other arrangements can be made for payments?

During the patient's stay:

- When can I (or another family member) talk to the therapist or doctor?
- Will we be able to discuss treatment with the doctor or therapist? When? How often?
- When can family members visit? For how long?
- Will the patient have a daily schedule of activities or treatments? If so, what activities will the patient be involved in?
- Is therapy (group or individual) available and is it part of the treatment plan?
- What clothes should the patient bring?
- How long will the patient be at the facility? Who makes this decision?
- Will the family be advised of changes in treatment?
- Who will make the evaluation for discharging the patient? When will this happen?

Ask the therapist:

- What can the individual and family expect during the treatment process?
- What can be the expected reactions/behaviors of the patient?
- How should the family respond?
- How can the individual and family prepare for unexpected behavior and possible setbacks?

Leaving the hospital:

- Will someone advise the individual and family about adjustment concerns such as the need for further counseling or a medication schedule?
- What can we expect when the individual is discharged?
- Will he/she be on medications? Which ones?
- How will these medications help? Are they habit-forming? What are the side effects? What is the dosage?

For more information, contact Mental Health America at 414-276-3122, or visit our web site at www.mhawisconsin.org.

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