

Part III: Guidelines with Hospitalization

Of the 5.4 million people who sought mental health treatment in 1990, less than 7% required hospitalization. More than half of those who needed inpatient-care had schizophrenia, one of the most severe forms of mental illness. If you or someone you know may have a mental illness, the chances are that you will not need hospitalization. But, if you do, the following information will help assure you of the best care possible.

Questions To Ask

- Has the person been professionally evaluated? By whom? Do I understand the diagnosis?
- If the patient has not been evaluated, why am I seeking admission for the person?
 - a) A doctor's recommendation?
 - b) Need to have patient removed from family situation? Why? Because of behavioral problems?
 - c) What are they? Because family cannot care for him or her? Why?
 - d) What symptoms is the patient exhibiting which cause concern?

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 this person continue to treat the patient?
- Will the patient be seen by this professional on a regular basis?
- When will the initial evaluation take place?

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?
- Is the patient allowed to receive phone calls?
- Will the patient have a daily schedule of activities or treatments? What activities will the patient be involved in?
- Is there group or private therapy 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?

Leaving The Hospital

- Will someone advise the patient and family about adjustment concerns such as the need for further counseling or a medication schedule?
- What can we expect when the patient 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?
- How long will the patient have to take this medication?
- If the patient leaves the hospital without permission how will the hospital handle this?
- If this occurs, what is the parent or family's responsibility?
- Is the patient able to continue school or work while in the hospital? Or how soon after he or she is discharged?
- If classes are offered to patients, what are they and who teaches them?
- What follow-up treatment or support group options should the family and patient consider?

Financial And Insurance Issues

- Does the hospital accept this type of 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 and how much are they for physicians, therapists or caretakers? What may these separate charges be?
- How are fees assessed?
- When will billing occur?
- If insurance only covers part of the cost, what other arrangements can be made for payments?
- Is there other assistance available? Will the facility accept partial payments or payments on a schedule?

Ask The Therapist

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

Mental Illness in the Family: Part III: Guidelines for Hospitalization is one in a series of pamphlets on helping family members with mental illness. The other titles include:

Mental Illness in the Family: Part I Recognizing the Warning Signs and How to Cope

Mental Illness in the Family: Part II: Guidelines for Seeking Care

For More Information:

For a free and confidential mental health screening, go on-line to www.mhacolorado.org.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Public Inquiries and Information Resources

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