

Inpatient Hospitalization: A Resource for Parents and Families

If your child experiences a mental health crisis where there is concern for their safety or the safety of others, they may need a short stay in the hospital. This level of care, or inpatient hospitalization, has a **primary goal of safety**, and the care team at the hospital will work to help resolve the immediate crisis by stabilizing your child's symptoms.

It is understandable to think or hope that this will be the only step that your child will need to be mentally healthy. However, this may just be the first step in their journey, and you may have already tried other treatment strategies that led your child here. Ongoing supports will likely be needed for your child's long-term mental health care.



What to Expect during the Admissions Process:

- You may start the admissions process at an emergency room and wait for placement in an inpatient unit. Waiting times will vary and may extend over multiple days based on availability. Be sure to identify a point of contact while you wait.
- The specific hospital and provider identified for your child's placement is impacted by factors like insurance and space availability. Ultimately your child may be placed at a facility out of your area.



According to Act 65 of 2020, Pennsylvania allows children ages 14-17 the ability to consent to their own inpatient mental health treatment. Parents are allowed to provide consent to mental health treatment until their children turn 18. Once consent is provided by either party, it cannot be overridden.
Learn more [here](#).

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Initial Questions to Ask the Inpatient Hospital Staff:

Tip: Bring a notebook to write down important information so you can refer back to it as needed!

- Who is my main point of contact (e.g., social worker, charge nurse, therapist, etc.) and how do I reach them?
- How do I get in touch with my child or learn updates about them?
- What will the first 24 hours look like for my child?
- Is there anything I should start doing now to prepare for when my child is ready to leave the hospital?
- What types of treatments will be available to my child? Are there differences between weekends and weekdays?





What to Expect During Your Child's Stay:

- As the care team learns more about your child and their needs, many aspects of your child's treatment plan and stay will change to meet your child's specific needs.
 - **Length of stay** will vary and depends on a variety of factors such as
 - time it takes to assess their needs;
 - time it takes to stabilize their symptoms;
 - insurance company approval.
 - Your child's stay may include both **therapy and medication** as part of the process to stabilize symptoms and determine the most appropriate treatment.
 - As the parent, you should be included in any discussions about recommended medication changes. If you have any questions regarding the benefits and risks of recommended medications, you have the right to discuss that with the doctor.
- ★ Since this is a short stay, it is important to work on **discharge planning** together with your care team as early on as possible. Although your child may not have a formal diagnosis or treatment plan when it is time to leave, planning with your care team can help prevent gaps in care. If your point of contact on the care team doesn't bring up discharge planning, you should.



Tips from Parents who've been there:

Leaving your child at the hospital can be overwhelming, but **remember they're in safe hands.**

Once you get home:

- **Recharge** by eating and getting the rest you need to make sure you're taking care of yourself throughout this process. Encourage your other family members to do the same.
- **Read** any information that the hospital has given you. It will likely answer many of your questions.
- **Remember** that you are an important part of your child's care team. You have the right to be involved, ask questions, and understand how your child is doing.
- **Recognize** that your child is also part of their own treatment process, and their feelings and preferences are essential. Their involvement is important for longer-term recovery.

Helpful Resources:

Scan the QR code or click the buttons below to access more resources that can help.

Article - Taking a
Child to the ER



[Click here!](#)



Tip Sheet - Taking to
your child about suicide



[Click here!](#)

