



Department of Health

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

SALLY DRESLIN, M.S., R.N.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

July 25, 2018

Dear Administrator:

The New York State Department of Health (DOH) and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) are jointly issuing this letter to provide clinical guidance to hospitals to assist hospitals in addressing the emergency mental health needs of individuals in New York State. This guidance is a follow up to a Dear Administrator Letter issued by DOH and OMH (DAL 16-03 issued on November 15, 2016) available at this link:

https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/hospital_administrator/letters/2016/2016-11-15_dal_16-03_guidance_to_phl.htm

The November 15, 2016 DAL provided guidance on the obligations of the emergency department (ED) to provide both a physical and mental health assessment and clarified the expectations for appropriate transfers. Recognizing the improvements that hospitals have made, and the challenges they face in providing appropriate services to patients with mental health issues, this letter is being issued to describe resources and recommended practices for EDs that are not licensed by OMH as Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEP). These resources can assist hospitals in caring for individuals with a mental health needs, particularly those that may have a potential to be a risk to themselves or others.

The attached resource document includes guidance and descriptions of tools and resources that hospitals can use to ensure appropriate, timely, and effective assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and discharge planning to coordinate ongoing post-discharge care of patients that have or demonstrate potential mental health issues.

Following these protocols should improve the ED practitioner's ability to assess an individual's mental health status, and risk of violent behavior toward self and/or others. Improved assessments will better inform the practitioner's development of an effective and appropriate treatment decision. For patients being discharged from the emergency department, comprehensive but detailed and clearly understood discharge plans will instruct patients on necessary next steps, link patients with providers for defined appointments for follow-up care, and establish a framework to address the patient's post-discharge needs and minimize the risk for future violent behavior or decompensation of mental health.

DOH and OMH are committed to working with hospitals to ensure appropriate and effective evaluation and treatment for individuals with mental health needs. As such, we strongly recommend that hospitals with non-CPEP emergency departments consider adopting these protocols into their standard of practice. Adoption of the protocols will raise the standard of care throughout New York State and further improve the health and safety of patients. We look forward to working with you during the coming months on this important quality improvement initiative. Thank you for continued support and efforts.

Sincerely,

Daniel B. Sheppard
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Office of Primary Care and Health Systems Management
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Executive Deputy Commissioner
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