



State of Vermont

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DMH Emergency Department Certificate of Need Feedback for SVMC

The Green Mountain Care Board asked for DMH input on Certificate of Need (CON) requests for the emergency department (ED) redesign project at Southwestern Vermont Medical Center (SVMC).

DMH presents the following data when making ED recommendations:

- **Optimized and Least Restrictive Environment:** Data indicates that 95% of patients are voluntarily seeking mental health care. We believe the focus should be on creating an optimized environment for all patients and to ensure that care is provided in the least restrictive setting possible. While we appreciate there may be safety concerns that cause some involuntary patient areas to be locked, we do not believe voluntary patients should be locked in the ED. Rather, we recommend that the doors remain open with staff monitoring/observing the voluntary patients.
- **Additional Patient Space:** Patients in need of an admission to a psychiatric unit tend to have longer stays in emergency departments than those there for solely medical issues. Having a comfortable area outside of their individual patient room they can freely access has been shown to reduce stress and acuity of individuals trying to manage a psychiatric crisis.
- **Safety:**
 - Separating levels of acuity
 - Separating adults from children/adolescents

SVMC proactively consulted with DMH and persons with lived experience about design recommendations, and reviewed DMH's feedback to other facilities about their ED redesign. As a result, SVMC's CON proposal included the following:

- **Optimized and Least Restrictive Environment:**
 - Flexibility to secure portions of, or the entire care area, according to best-practice and the attending provider's assessment of the milieu of patient acuity and presentation.
 - Freedom to leave. The unit will be unlocked such that persons voluntarily seeking mental health care may leave.
- **Additional Patient Space:** Group room for visits with peers and support persons.
- **Safety:**
 - For safety, the design allows separation of high and low acuity individuals or the flexibility to separate pediatric and adult individuals.
 - The limited number of higher acuity persons with evaluation status will receive person-center care in the secure area while efforts advance towards placement at an acute mental health facility.
- **Additional Considerations:**
 - Windows providing natural light into each person's individual room, including those in the secured area
 - Ability to access the mental health crisis care area directly through triage or from the ambulance bay so individuals needing care, family, and peer supports can gain access without exposure to the medical care areas of the emergency department

DMH is encouraged to see the direction of ED design in Vermont moving toward patient-centered planning at SVMC.

SVMC ED Redesign Questions

1. Do you plan to do group treatment/therapy in the group area? If so, what groups do you anticipate providing?
2. Can the Group Room also be used as a waiting room for mental health patients who are awaiting evaluation or placement/disposition?
3. Have you outlined policies of how/when certain doors should be locked/unlocked?
4. Are any of the mental health rooms convertible to medical rooms?
5. What are plans for monitoring the rooms that are more distant from the Staff Area?

Attachment D- Mental Health Crisis Care Area

