



Mental Health Issues and Challenges

Northwestern Medical Center

For the Green Mountain Care Board
January, 2016



NMC's mission is to provide exceptional care for our community.

A Top Priority: Mental Health System Improvements & Opportunities to Better Serve Patients

Vermont continues to experience a lack of inpatient mental health bed availability and staffing resulting in:

- Long ED boarding times;
- Inappropriate social admissions;
- Inappropriate level of care and clinical setting;
- Poor long-term outcomes for patients.
- Our patients are often trapped in the negotiation of being “too acute” or “not acute enough” for inpatient psychiatric hospital admission.
- Our staff and our community partners are going above and beyond in a compromised system to keep patients safe.

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- Geographic and demographic differences and challenges among all hospitals resulting in varying needs for inpatient psychiatric admissions.
- Our complex gero-psychiatric patients often do not qualify for placement at local long term facilities- leading to complex care management /placement issues.
- Results in hospitals becoming 'homes' to these patients for months at a time, with little to no psychiatric support systems in place.
- Often times violent/combative behaviors require 1:1 nursing, security or patient care companion staff that poses enormous staffing challenges and cost to the system.
- Security contracts between the State/Sheriff Departments do not cover the number of sit-watches needed. Hospitals (inpatient units and ED's) left to manage on their own.

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- Substance abuse in our community and throughout Vermont continues to put strain on the medical system; many co-occurring with mental health conditions.
- Wait times for treatment continue to be a challenge given the minimal number of providers; and many patients have multiple ED visits.
- Maple Leaf recently shut down for minimum 30 days creating added pressure.
- Need for focus on additional psychiatric programs/physicians to support Primary Care providers locally.
- The new methadone clinic is slated to open in April 2017 and has the potential to relieve some pressure for treatment of the more acute patients.
- NMC has hired a new Addiction Medicine / Psychiatry physician who will start in August 2017.

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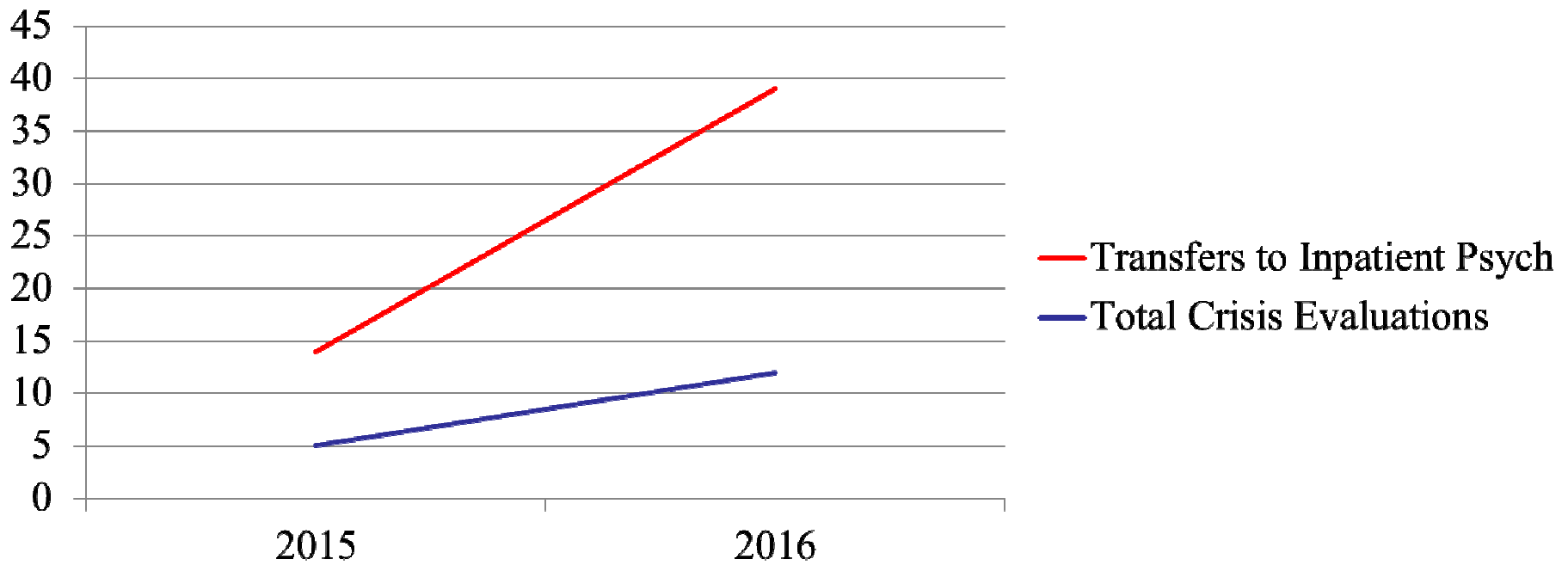
2015-2016 ED Hold / Crisis Data: *only includes Crisis patients

	2015		2016	
	# of Patients	Average LOS	# of Patients	Average LOS
Transfers for Inpatient Psychiatric Bed	40	14 Hours	41	39 Hours
Total Crisis Evaluations Ordered	294	5 Hours	231	12 Hours

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*Northwestern Medical Center
Average Length of Stay (Hours)
ED Crisis Holds*



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2016 In Patient (Med Surg/ICU) Delay Day Data:

Total Number of Patients (EE, Crisis, other MH admitted needing placement)	Total Number of Delay Days
31	543

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Recommendations

- We need strong legislative advocacy from our local delegation for improved mental health systems.
- Current mental health funding cannot be compromised.
- Must ensure adequate staffing for all inpatient psychiatric beds for maximum availability and utilization.
- Ensure efficient systems, standardized workflows and processes and review of policy and statutes: e.g. standardized clinical criteria for psychiatric inpatient admission across all hospitals.
- Once criteria is consistently met, and delays continue, evaluate number of inpatient psychiatric beds needed.
- Additional law enforcement/sheriff staffing support for sit watches (for violent/combatative patients) must be achieved.

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Recommendations Cont'd...

- Continued support for increased mental health/substance abuse treatment and prevention efforts.
- Need to recruit/retain more Psychiatrists to stabilize that workforce and narrow the gap.
- Create centralized data management system to accurately report ED and hospital mental health/psychiatric information among all hospitals and services.
- Consider Gero-Psychiatric unit.
- Consider Regional Step Down and Secure Step Down units (Adult and Adolescents).
- Consider evaluation of use of Crisis Beds; review utilization and future needs.
- Opportunity to strategically collaborate with community agencies to better support overall community needs.

Moving Forward Together
To a Healthier Future

Thank You



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