

2008-2009 GRAND JURY REPORT

Riverside County Regional Medical Center Emergency Treatment Services/Inpatient Treatment Facility Riverside County Department of Mental Health Department of Psychiatry

Background

The Riverside County Regional Medical Center's (RCRMC) Department of Psychiatry is located at 9990 County Farm Road, Riverside. This location is referred to as the Arlington Campus (AC). The AC includes Emergency Treatment Services (ETS) and Inpatient Treatment Facility (ITF) in separate areas that render short-term and long-term services. Expenditures for FY 2007/2008 were \$24,989,398 (ITF) and \$8,419,928 (ETS) totaling \$33,409,326. Riverside County Department of Mental Health (RCDMH), located at 4060 County Circle Drive adjacent to the AC of RCRMC is committed to providing services to the mentally disabled on a sliding fee basis. Private insurance, Medi-Cal and in some cases Medicare are billed.

EMERGENCY TREATMENT SERVICES

ETS provides psychiatric assessment and crisis intervention to adults, children and adolescents. There is an attending psychiatrist on duty 24 hours a day. Treatment teams are composed of psychiatrists, nurses, licensed psychiatric technicians, social workers, and case managers. Some patients may come in for care on their own, while families, police, emergency medical technicians or concerned persons bring in others. Patients who come for emergency services receive treatment there and may be discharged with medication and referrals for outpatient treatment in the community. Some patients are transferred or referred to other mental health facilities, while others are admitted to ITF for further treatment.

INPATIENT TREATMENT FACILITY

The ITF is a locked acute psychiatric treatment hospital that utilizes the expertise of a multidisciplinary team to treat patients with mental and emotional problems. The facility is divided into four units. Unit A is a nine-bed unit housing the more aggressive and/or suicidal adults. All patients in Unit A are under continuous observation. Units B and C are each 28-bed adult-care units for patients who benefit from multidisciplinary treatment but do not require constant monitoring. Unit D is a 12-bed adolescent treatment unit that offers specialized treatment for patients 13 to 17 years of age.

Findings

1. For the months of March and April 2009, ETS interviewed more than 1,700 patients. The only existing triage area, with its two interview rooms, is inadequate to handle the volume of patient interviews. This situation appears to be inconsistent with Welfare and Institutions Code Section 5325.1 (b), relating to patient confidentiality. RCRMC executive administration has shared with the 2008-2009 Grand Jury the proposed plans for expansion of the AC. As of the date of this report construction has not commenced. (The patient confidentiality issue was also a finding of the 2006-2007 Riverside County Grand Jury.)
2. During a February 2009 visit to ITF, it was observed that one of the monitors surveilling a patient room in Unit A, (Intensive Treatment) was not functioning. It was also noted that the images provided by the monitors surveilling other patient rooms were grainy. In October 2008 there were monitors on order with county Facilities Management to replace Unit A monitors, as well as those in ETS and the restraint room in Unit D. In February 2009 the requisition was modified to include additional monitors to cover blind spots in Units B and C. As of this report none has been received.
3. Psychiatric patients are released with a 14-day supply of medication. Because of the minimal number of outpatient clinics available, upon release there can be a lengthy time interval before their scheduled follow-up medical appointments. This lag creates a recurring situation where the patients exhaust their supply of medication before they are seen. Staff refers to this situation as a “revolving door syndrome,” in which patients will return to emergency services for additional medication multiple times in the interim. Of the more than 1,700 ETS patients seen in March and April, 142 of them had returned only for medication. Because they are not acute patients, some wait up to 12 hours before they are evaluated by staff.
4. There is a need for RCRMC and the Department of Mental Health to provide outpatient clinics for patients suffering from chronic mental illness.
5. Other than at the AC, uninsured psychiatric clients countywide do not get served unless they are in crisis. When these patients frequent the hospital emergency rooms on a recurring basis, they may become eligible for coverage from Proposition 63 monies. (These state funds are provided to counties to expand mental health services.)

6. There is a lack of services in the Coachella Valley for uninsured mentally ill individuals not in crisis.
7. Interviews revealed that almost daily, patients in the inpatient facility are ready to be released to the next level of care with no immediate place to go. Meanwhile, there are patients in emergency services that have already been evaluated for placement in the inpatient facility with no available inpatient beds.

Recommendations

**Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Riverside County Regional Medical Center, CEO
Riverside County Regional Mental Health
Riverside County Human Resources Safety Department
Riverside County Human Resources Risk Management
Riverside County Facilities Management**

1. Expedite plans to expand the capacity of ETS at the AC. Consider utilization of portable office units as an immediate solution to the space problem.
2. Give top priority to the urgent need for receipt and installation of the video monitors that are on order.
3. Open an Urgent Care Clinic in the ETS lobby for patients who need to be seen and are not in crisis, thus addressing the “revolving door syndrome”.
4. Create an outpatient clinic at the AC to service patients suffering from chronic mental illness.
5. Design a program that will qualify uninsured patients for funding based on Proposition 63 / Mental Health Services Act requirements.
6. Provide at least one adequate inpatient psychiatric treatment facility in the Coachella Valley for the uninsured population.
7. Take immediate action to expand the ITF capacity.

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