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New Directions partners with national coalition to improve psychiatric emergency care
People with behavioral health issues are going to emergency rooms at increasing rates

Kansas City, Mo. – Feb. 15, 2017 – New Directions Behavioral Health announced that it has partnered with the Coalition on Psychiatric Emergencies, a group of more than 30 national leaders in emergency medicine, psychiatry and patient advocacy aimed at improving patient care in emergency departments during psychiatric crisis. The coalition is managed by the [Emergency Medicine Foundation](#).

According to a survey of nearly 1,500 emergency physicians, 80 percent say the mental health systems in their regions are not working for patients. A recent National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) survey also found that 44 percent of patients were unhappy with their experiences: 38 percent waited more than seven hours to see a mental health professional, and in 21 percent of cases, the wait was more than ten hours.

“We’re excited to work with the coalition partners so we can improve the patient experience and deliver the care people need,” said Peggy DeCarlis, chief operating and innovation officer of New Directions. “That starts with advocating for better mental health resources in all communities so patients with psychiatric illnesses can move through emergency departments quickly and into treatment specifically designed for their needs.”

As funding for state and local social services is cut and the amount of effective evidence-based outpatient treatment programs decreases, the number of people presenting at hospital emergency departments for behavioral health care is rising.

The increase in psychiatric emergencies in the ER is raising hospital costs, draining resources and negatively impacting patients. “Currently there is no universal way to treat these emergencies in the ER,” said Michael Gerardi, MD, coalition steering committee chair and past president of the American College of Emergency Physicians. “It’s time we think about doing things differently.”

New Directions will collaborate with emergency physician leaders to develop more unified treatment models that improve the treatment experience for patients and health care providers.

With an eye toward reversing the alarming trend in psychiatric emergency room visits, New Directions and the coalition plan to:

- Develop a continuum of care to include prevention and aftercare
- Ensure education and training for those who care for patients, including psychiatric training fellowships
- Improve the treatment experience for patients and staff during a psychiatric emergency
- Drive improved quality and safety of diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric emergencies
- Decrease boarding of psychiatric patients in emergency departments

To learn more about the Coalition on Psychiatric Emergencies and how it's helping to improve the treatment of psychiatric emergencies, visit emfoundation.org/cpe/.

To learn more about New Directions and the behavioral health services it provides to health plans and employers, visit ndbh.com.

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