

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on the Need to Maintain Intermediate- and Long-Term Inpatient Care Access for Persons with Serious Mental Illness

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2019

Approved by the Assembly, May 2019

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

Issue:

While there have been significant gains made towards increased community resources for persons with serious mental illness, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) views with concern the trend towards phasing out of the capacity to provide intermediate- and long-term inpatient psychiatric care to persons with serious mental illness.

Administrative pressures to transition patients from inpatient into community settings prematurely can result in suboptimal or inappropriate placements, which can in turn result in substandard -- and even dehumanizing-- circumstances for persons with mental illness. Inappropriate dispositions may include placements in correctional facilities, skilled nursing facilities, or boarding homes, and a portion of individuals become, or remain, undomiciled. Even with comprehensive community supports, a small percentage of persons with serious mental illness who are discharged will be unable to function adequately or safely enough to achieve successful and sustained integration into a community. For these individuals, a cycle of high utilization of emergency room services and/or acute inpatient psychiatric services may ensue.

Intermediate- and long-term inpatient care settings can play a critical role in needs assessments around safety and community supports for individuals who are being transitioned from inpatient to community settings.

Community mental health centers and other community resources are already under pressure to make stringent choices in distributing finite resources towards supporting those persons for whom a community-based level of care is most appropriate.

APA Position:

- 1. The APA recognizes and supports continued development and implementation of comprehensive and innovative programs and treatment modalities for persons with serious mental illness in all locations.**

- 2. The APA asserts that it is imperative that intermediate- and long-term inpatient treatment and care, as part of a full spectrum of service levels, remain readily accessible to persons with serious mental illness who require such levels of service.**

- 3. Community mental health centers, integrated health care centers, and allied community resources shall have sufficient funding and staffing to provide comprehensive wrap-around services to persons with serious mental illness who can successfully reside in their communities when receiving such services.**

Author: APA Council on Healthcare Systems and Financing