

# VERMONT 2021

## Data Collection and Report on Patients Seeking Mental Health Care in Hospital Settings

A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

*As required by Act 200, Section 7 of the 2018 legislative session*



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## Patients Seeking Mental Health Care in Hospital Settings

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(a) Pursuant to the authority granted to the Commissioner of Mental Health under 18 V.S.A. § 7401, the Commissioner shall collect the following information from hospitals in the State that have either an inpatient psychiatric unit or emergency department receiving patients with psychiatric health needs:

(1) the number of individuals seeking psychiatric care voluntarily and the number of individuals in the custody or temporary custody of the Commissioner who are admitted to inpatient psychiatric units and the corresponding lengths of stay on the unit;

(2) the lengths of stay in emergency departments for individuals seeking psychiatric care voluntarily and for individuals in the custody or temporary custody of the Commissioner; and

(3) data regarding emergency involuntary procedures performed in an emergency department on individuals seeking psychiatric care.

(b) On or before January 15 of each year between 2019 and 2021, the Commissioner of Mental Health shall submit a written report to the House Committee on Health Care and to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare containing the data collected pursuant to subsection (a) of this section during the previous calendar year.

### A Note Regarding Timing

The Department of Mental Health sought and received permission for this report deadline to be extended from January 15, 2019, to January 31, 2019 and for the Department to report on information collected in the prior federal fiscal year (October-September) rather than calendar year in order to allow for a full quarter of claims runoff.

# PATIENTS SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN HOSPITAL SETTINGS

## Orientation to the Data

The time-period for this report is Federal Fiscal Year 2020, which runs from October to September. FFY 2020 is approximately 5-6 months of normal, pre-COVID operations and 5-6 months of COVID pandemic response. The system continues to see the impacts of COVID-19 on our capacity and utilization. Further extrapolation of the novel data presented herein would not be considered a reliable indicator of any pattern for future assumptions or projections and therefore not recommended.

### (1) The Number of Individuals Seeking Psychiatric Care Voluntarily and The Number of Individuals In Custody or Temporary Custody Of The Commissioner Who Are Admitted to Inpatient Psychiatric Units and Corresponding Lengths Of Stay On Unit.

Table 1: Adult Inpatient Stays on Psychiatric Units – FFY 2020 (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020)

Legal Status	Total # Admissions	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)	Length of Stay in Days (Median)
Involuntary	430	398	11,106	28	18
Voluntary	3,147	3,174	36,940	12	
Grand Total	3,577	3,572	48,046	13	7

#### Data Notes

- *Data Source: Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems-Network Services Organization (NSO), psychiatric inpatient data and the Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set. VAHHS-NSO did not engage with hospitals to perform a patient level reconciliation.*
- *Total bed days and lengths of stay are calculated for discharged patients only.*
- *Legal status based on reported legal status at admission.*

Table 2: Medicaid Paid Children’s Inpatient Hospitalizations at the Brattleboro Retreat FFY 2020 (October 2019- September 2020)

Legal Status	Total # Admissions	Total # Discharges	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)	Length of Stay in Days (Median)
Involuntary	20	19	15.11	9.00
Voluntary	225	217	14.81	10.00
Grand Total	245	236	14.83	10.00

#### Data Notes

- *Analysis is based on the youth inpatient tracking spreadsheet maintained by the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA).*
- *DVHA only tracks admissions with primary Medicaid.*

- Prior to January 2020, DVHA did not complete any utilization review or track any data for children’s ACO inpatient mental health admissions. In January 2020, DVHA began completing utilization review and collecting data on the Brattleboro Retreat’s children’s ACO inpatient mental health admissions.
- Includes youth who had an involuntary or voluntary legal status at admission.

## (2) Length of Stay in Emergency Departments for Individuals Seeking Psychiatric Care Voluntarily and For Individuals In Custody or Temporary Custody of The Commissioner.

Table 3: All Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health  
FFY 2020 (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020)

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Inpatient ED	1,357	1,879	1.38
Outpatient ED	7,471	5,708	0.76
Grand Total	8,828	7,587	0.85

In its native format, total reported bed days for “inpatient” patients waiting in emergency departments also includes bed days for the inpatient psychiatric stay. To estimate the number of actual emergency department days, bed days were recalculated by subtracting reported Room and Board units from each case. For example, if the recorded admission and discharge date indicate a 5-day length of stay but only 3 Room and Board units are reported, it is assumed that the patient spent 3 days in an inpatient psychiatric unit and 2 days in the emergency department.

Therefore, the total reported bed days for “inpatient” patient types represents our best estimate of the total days people wait in emergency departments before receiving inpatient care at that hospital.

### Data Notes

- *Data Source: Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems – Network Services Organization (VAHHS-NSO), Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set. This is aggregate data pulled from the discharge data warehouse as received from Vermont Hospitals. VAHHS-NSO did not engage with hospitals to perform a patient level reconciliation.*
- *“Inpatient ED” patient types are those that waited in an emergency room and were admitted to the psychiatric unit of the same hospital in which they waited. “Outpatient ED” patient types are those that waited in an emergency room and were admitted to the psychiatric unit of a different hospital or were discharged back to the community.*
- *Total bed days and lengths of stay are calculated for discharged patients only.*

Table 4: Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health FFY 2020 (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020)

Patient Type By Legal Status	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Involuntary	507	1,065	2.10
Inpatient ED	145	217	1.50
Outpatient ED	362	848	2.34
Voluntary (est.)	8,321	6,522	0.78

Inpatient ED	1,212	1,662	1.37
Outpatient ED	7,109	4,860	0.68

In its native format, total reported bed days for “inpatient” patients waiting in emergency departments also includes bed days for the inpatient psychiatric stay. To estimate the number of actual emergency department days, bed days were recalculated by subtracting reported Room and Board units from each case. For example, if the recorded admission and discharge date indicate a 5-day length of stay but only 3 Room and Board units are reported, it is assumed that the patient spent 3 days in an inpatient psychiatric unit and 2 days in the emergency department. Therefore, the total reported bed days for “inpatient” patient types represents our best estimate of the total days people wait in emergency departments before receiving inpatient care at that hospital.

Data Notes

- *Data Sources: Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems – Network Services Organization (VAHHS-NSO), Vermont Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set (reported totals in bold). This is aggregate data pulled from the discharge data warehouse as received from Vermont Hospitals. VAHHS-NSO did not engage with hospitals to perform a patient level reconciliation. Vermont Department of Mental Health, Emergency room wait times for individuals in the custody of the Commissioner of Mental Health (reported figures in “Involuntary”).*
- *Voluntary figures for emergency room wait times numbers are estimated by subtracting reported totals from reported figures in “involuntary.” Voluntary length of stay is estimated by dividing the estimated number of voluntary bed days by the estimated number of voluntary discharges.*
- *“Inpatient” patient types are those that waited in an emergency room and were admitted to the psychiatric unit of the same hospital in which they waited. “Outpatient” patient types are those that waited in an emergency room and were admitted to the psychiatric unit of a different hospital or were discharged back to the community.*

### (3) Data Regarding Emergency Involuntary Procedures Performed in An Emergency Department on Individuals Seeking Psychiatric Care.

According to the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), physical restraints are defined as any manual method or physical or mechanical device, material, or equipment attached or adjacent to the resident’s body that the individual cannot remove easily which restricts freedom of movement or normal access to one’s body. This definition includes mechanical-type restraints, such as limb restraints, as well as brief physical holds by staff.

There is a continuum of approaches that are used by hospital staff to preserve safety; restraint is considered a last resort intervention as a response to prevent further harm to the patient or to the staff. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the CMS State Operations Manual requires that restraints be discontinued as the earliest possible time.

VAHHS queried its hospitals for information on restraints performed in emergency rooms for mental health patients. For the time-period of October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020, restraint was used for mental health patients in 295 total visits. This is approximately 3% of all visits for mental health to emergency departments.