

Report to  
The Vermont Legislature

# Patients Seeking Mental Health Care in Hospital Settings

In Accordance with Act 200, Sec. 7 (2018)

**Submitted to:** House Committee on Health Care  
Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

**Submitted by:** Emily Hawes, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

**Prepared by:** Stephen DeVoe, Director of Quality and Accountability, Department of Mental Health  
Nicole DiStasio, Director of Policy, Department of Mental Health

**Report Date:** January 15, 2023



**Department of Mental Health**  
**Agency of Human Services**  
280 State Drive, NOB-2 North Waterbury, VT  
05671  
[www.mentalhealth.vermont.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.vermont.gov)

## Legislative Language

---

### *Patients Seeking Mental Health Care in Hospital Settings*

- (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**
- (b) On or before January 15 of each year between 2022-2023, 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.*

# Contents

Legislative Language.....	2
Orientation to the Data .....	4
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.....	4
Length of Stay in Emergency Departments for Individuals Seeking Psychiatric Care Voluntarily and For Individuals in Custody or Temporary Custody of The Commissioner. ....	4
Data on Adult Patients .....	5
Data on Youth Patients.....	6

## Orientation to the Data

The time period for this report is Federal Fiscal Year 2022, which runs from October 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (VAHHS) continues to see the impacts of COVID-19 on both our system capacity and utilization.

### 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 2022 (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022)**

Legal Status	Total # Admissions	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Involuntary	490	501	18,599	37
Voluntary	2,674	2,795	25,284	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3,164</b>	<b>3,296</b>	<b>43,883</b>	<b>13</b>

**Table 2: Youth Inpatient Stays on Psychiatric Units – FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022)**

	Total # Admissions	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>3,516</b>	<b>19</b>

### 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 2022 (October 1, 2021 – Sept. 30, 2022)**

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Inpatient ED	1,321	2,302	1.74
Outpatient ED	7,185	8,219	1.14
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8,506</b>	<b>10,521</b>	<b>1.24</b>

#### Data Notes

- *Data Source: Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems-Network Services Organization (VAHHS-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.*

## Data on Adult Patients

**Table 4: Adult Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health – FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – Sept.30, 2022)**

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Inpatient ED	1,321	2,302	2
Outpatient ED	5,800	5,937	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,121</b>	<b>8,239</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 5: Adult Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health – FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – Sept. 30, 2022)  
Involuntary Legal Status**

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Inpatient ED	128	308	2
Outpatient ED	555	1,778	3
<b>Involuntary Total</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>2,086</b>	<b>3</b>

**Table 6: Adult Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health – FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – Sept 30, 2022)  
Voluntary Legal Status (Estimated)**

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Inpatient ED	1,193	1,994	2
Outpatient ED	5,245	4,159	1
<b>Voluntary Total</b>	<b>6,438</b>	<b>6,153</b>	<b>1</b>

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: 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.*
- *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.*

## Data on Youth Patients

**Table 7: Youth Emergency Room Waits for Mental Health – FFY 2022 (October 1, 2021 – Sept. 30, 2022)**

Patient Type	Total # Discharges	Total # Bed Days	Length of Stay in Days (Mean)
Involuntary	62	319	5
Voluntary	1,323	1,963	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,323</b>	<b>2,282</b>	<b>2</b>

All emergency room waits for youth are outpatient ED records, since Brattleboro Retreat is the only inpatient hospital for youth and does not have an emergency room.

### Data Notes

- *Data Source: 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.*
- *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.*