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CLERK OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
COUNTY OF TRINITY
BY: STACI HOLLIDAY

TRINITY COUNTY CIVIL GRAND JURY

2023

Mental Health Report

12/13/23 Reviewed *Amthye*
Judge Michael B. Harger

Mental Health in Trinity County

Introduction

Trinity County health care providers treat approximately 20 people in severe mental health crises each year. Some of these cases result in what is termed a '5150 hold' (a 72 hour involuntary detention for the person's own safety). California Welfare and Institutions Code § 5150).

The California Welfare and Institutions Code has specific rules for initiating a 72 hour hold on persons displaying some type of mental psychosis or distress, those rules, include but are not limited to the following:

- 1) The individual may present a danger to themselves
- 2) They may present a danger to other people, or
- 3) They may be gravely disabled and unable to care for themselves

During the 72 hour hold, every effort is made to stabilize the individual's mental state, so that they no longer present a threat to themselves or others.

Only specific professionals can initiate a 5150 hold, it must be a police officer, a mental health professional authorized in our county, or a licensed member of a crisis team.

The individual must be taken to an authorized health center that holds certification to provide psychiatric care. Many regular hospitals do not have this certification and/or the capability to treat people in mental health crises. Transportation to a skilled facility is typically necessary.

Background

The 2023 Trinity County Grand Jury researched how capable and equipped our county's healthcare system is to manage cases of mental health crisis, in particular, persons who were subject to section 5150.

Methodology

- Interviews
 - Members of staff at Behavioral Health
 - Members of staff at Trinity Hospital
- Attended Behavioral Health Public Hearing on Funding, June 21 2023
- Online research
 - <https://www.trinitycounty.org/Behavioral-Health>
 - <https://mhsoac.ca.gov/>
- Tour of Trinity Hospital ER facility

Discussion

In Trinity County there are two avenues where people can seek help if they are experiencing a mental health crisis - Behavioral Health and Trinity Hospital ER.

Behavioral Health is situated at 1450 Main Street in Weaverville. They are open Monday through Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm. Individuals can schedule appointments with appropriate qualified staff at their Weaverville or Hayfork clinics. They also offer telehealth and telephone appointments for anyone who prefers or needs. The Behavioral Health Crisis Team is available to assist in crisis management 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The number to reach them is listed on their website. Information for contacting National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is also listed.

Trinity Hospital is located at 60 Easter Avenue in Weaverville. It's ER department is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with a medical doctor on duty. It has two treatment rooms. The hospital facility and its staff are equipped and qualified to manage physical traumas. They are not a certified psychiatric care unit. Individuals who come into the ER with a need for emergency psychiatric care and/or a 5150 hold, have to be transferred to an appropriate skilled facility. Such facilities exist only out of county. A member of Behavioral Health's 24 hour Crisis Management Team will be contacted to come to the ER and evaluate the patient. Each patient must be assessed by an ER physician to determine they are coherent and cognizant of their circumstances before a Behavioral Health staff member is called in.

The Trinity Hospital ER is not able to accommodate a patient that is subject to section 5150. Currently, there has been difficulty in finding rooms available for the crisis patient to reside until a more permanent placement is found. Oftentimes, these patients will be limited to a gurney in the ER hallway near the nurses station. While this seems reasonable for safety, because the patient is under the watchful eye of the medical team on duty, it gives no privacy for the patient in crisis.



Two different views of the Gurney by the nurses station where crisis patients wait until permanent placement is found.



Members of Behavioral Health's Crisis Management team are available to assist with the patient on hold during the time they are at Trinity Hospital. However there is no designated room with the necessary office equipment to enable Behavioral Health staff to work on the search for transfer to an appropriate skilled facility, while at the same allowing them to monitor the patient, which requires Behavioral Health staff to leave the patient so they can go to the Behavioral Health department to use the office facilities available there. This results in the patient being placed on the hallway gurney so they can remain safe and be watched by staff at the nurses station. The search can sometimes take days as skilled psychiatric facilities are in short supply. Behavioral Health's staff members need access to phone and computer to aid the search for a facility and transportation for the patient to that facility. These types of resources are available at the hospital, however they also need to be available for hospital staff to use.

With further inquiry we learned that Trinity Hospital ER does have a workstation on wheels that contains office equipment that could be used by Behavioral Health staff & a private room is available to them and the patient, when necessary.

Currently, discussions are underway for plans to build a new hospital. If these plans are put in action, the new facility should be completed in approximately 10 years. Hospital staff anticipate the larger building will better accommodate mental health crisis patients with a private room and the resources necessary for Behavioral Health staff to work on transfer on site.

While Trinity County Behavioral Health does provide services for crisis prevention such as Cedar Home and Milestones Wellness Center (both located in Weaverville), they are dependent on the medical services provided at Trinity Hospital ER in order to initiate a 5150 hold on a patient *in* crisis. To a similar degree, Trinity Hospital is dependent upon Trinity County Behavioral Health staff to perform a safety evaluation and determine a care plan for that individual. The two departments should cooperate and work in conjunction to ensure a patient remains safe and receives the best possible care.

Our investigation allowed us to learn that there is a pending MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), that was being drafted between the two entities that may resolve any miscommunication or lack of communication as to the agreed upon policy & procedures, including what is to be available in the processing of a crisis patient. The departure of the former CAO (County Administrative Officer), caused a delay on the finalization of this MOU and the priorities of other county matters that are the responsibility of newly hired CAO is causing further delay.

Commendations

Both Trinity County Behavioral Health and Trinity Hospital seem to have kind and compassionate staff, committed to the health and welfare of their patients.

Findings

F1. Private rooms and a portable 'office on wheels' seem to be available at Trinity Hospital for Behavioral Health staff to use in the care and placement of crisis patients, however these resources are not being utilized and it is unclear why.

F2. Trinity County Behavioral Health and Trinity Hospital are dependent on each others cooperation to ensure the needs of crisis patients are being met. It appears that there is a lack of cooperation or miscommunications on the responsibilities of each partner.

Recommendations

R1. Trinity Hospital ER staff make it known to Behavioral Health staff that they have a private room with 'office on wheels' available when appropriate, on a regular basis.

R2. Prioritize the implementation of the memorandum or understanding (MOU) that is pending between Trinity Hospital and Trinity County for crisis patient processing.

R3. Include a designated, private room with office-like accommodations for crisis patient care in the plans for the new Trinity Hospital facility.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSE

In accordance with Penal Code 933 and 933.05, the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury requires a response from:

1. Trinity County Board of Supervisors
 2. The Mountain Communities Healthcare District of Board of Directors
- within 90 days of receipt of this report.

In addition, the Trinity County Civil Grand Jury invites a response from;

1. The Trinity Hospital CEO
 2. The Trinity County Behavioral Health Services Director
 3. The Trinity County Behavioral Health Clinical Services Director
- within ~~90~~ days of receipt of this report.

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