

**USA HEALTH: DEPARTMENT of EMERGENCY MEDICINE**  
**Academic and Administrative Policies and Procedures**

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**SUBJECT: Referral of ED Patients to AltaPointe's Behavioral Health Crisis Center**

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**I. PURPOSE OR OBJECTIVE:**

- a. To describe the process by which the USA Health University Hospital ED (UH ED) and Free-Standing Emergency Department (FED) can identify and refer patients to AltaPointe's Behavioral Health Crisis Center for mental health needs.

**II. RELATED/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- a. AltaPointe's Behavioral Health Crisis Center (BHCC) is a voluntary, 23-hour temporary observation center for patients in mental health crisis located at 2401 Gordon Smith Drive, Mobile, AL 36617.

**III. POLICY DETAILS:**

- a. The BHCC is appropriate for voluntary patients who, due to their symptoms, cannot wait for an outpatient appointment but are not severe enough to require a secure, locked psychiatric facility. This does not apply to patients in acute withdrawal from substance use disorders.

**IV. PROCESS:**

- a. Patients who present to the UH ED or FED require an evaluation by a provider for all acute medical and behavioral health complaints.
  - i. In addition to the work up needed for any acute medical and behavioral health complaints, patients referred to the BHCC must have a CBC, CMP, ethanol level, urine drug screen and HCG (if relevant), and testing a valproic acid or lithium level, if the patient is on either of these medications.
- b. Inclusion criteria for eligibility: mental health crisis including suicidal thoughts (but without active plan), depression, mania.
- c. Patients who meet the inclusion criteria should then be screened for exclusion criteria.
  - i. Medical exclusion criteria: urinary catheter, colostomy, seizure in the past 72 hours, injury that requires wound care, feeding tube, fever, on hemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis, on oxygen, nightly CPAP/BiPAP, inability to toilet independently, inability to transfer independently, presence of IV port or PICC line, persistent altered mental status, ethanol level greater than 240 mg/dL, history of dementia, history of intellectual disability, history of alcohol withdrawal seizures, or history of delirium tremens.
  - ii. Behavioral health exclusion criteria: active suicidality with intent to harm themselves, homicidality with an intent to harm others, has required PRNs for agitation in the past 24 hours, or patient is too impaired by substance intoxication to be able to consent for treatment.
- d. If a patient meets all inclusion criteria, none of the exclusion criteria, and is willing to be

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evaluated at the Behavioral Health Crisis Center, inform the patient of the following facility requirements, and the patient must agree.

- i. The BHCC is a no smoking/vaping facility, but nicotine patches are available.
- ii. Patients are required to change into scrubs.
- iii. Patients are unable to have their cell phones with them (cell phone will be stored in a safe space in the facility).
- iv. Patients must be willing to spend the night.
- v. The BHCC does not have beds but has large recliners in a communal space.
- e. To start the referral process, please call the medical provider referral number 251-660-2384. You will be connected to an Access to Care representative who will ask screening questions if appropriate have ED documentation faxed to the BHCC.
  - i. This process can be performed by nursing, case management, social work, or a provider.
  - ii. If a patient will be discharged from the ED and referred as an outpatient to the BHCC the following day, please still call the center to inform them of the patient.
- f. After 9pm, if a patient meets all inclusion criteria and none of the exclusion criteria for referral to the BHCC, they should either be held in the ED for transfer and acceptance after 8am the following day, or can be discharged from the ED and told to follow up with the Behavioral Health Crisis Center the next day.
  - i. This decision is at the discretion of the ED physician.
  - ii. If the patient is discharged to follow at the BHCC the following day please call and inform the representative on call about the patient and that they were told to follow up at the BHCC the following day.

**V. OTHER INFORMATION:** None

**VI. REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS:**

- a. None

**Notes:**

*Prior approval and revision dates: none*

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*This policy was also reviewed by: n/a*