Making a Loved One’s Hospital Stay and Discharge Safer

What You Need to Know

INPATIENT SUICIDE OCCURS WHEN A PERSON TAKES HIS OR HER OWN LIFE AT A HOSPITAL OR HEALTHCARE FACILITY

ON AVERAGE, INPATIENT SUICIDE OCCURS SIX TIMES PER DAY EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

6 PATIENTS
42 PATIENTS
168 PATIENTS
2,016 PATIENTS

WHY DOES INPATIENT SUICIDE HAPPEN?

POORLY TRAINED STAFF MEMBERS
UNDERSTAFFED HOSPITALS
IMPROPER SUICIDE WATCH
INADEQUATE POLICIES regarding dangerous contraband (such as shoelaces and belts)
UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS

STEP 1.
Make sure hospital staff knows exactly what your loved one has said about suicide and any steps they’ve taken to die by suicide. Don’t be so sure the hospital will ask.

STEP 2.
Ask who will be assessing your loved one and their qualifications to do so. The life of your loved one is in their hands. Don’t be afraid to be proactive.

STEP 3.
Tell the staff you want to be part of the treatment team. If there is a decision about your loved one’s care, your opinion counts.

STEP 4.
Make sure your loved one signs a waiver of confidentiality. That way you can be informed by staff what your loved one says about suicide. Pressing for a discharge can be a risk factor for suicide.

STEP 5.
Determine how often the psychiatrist will visit your loved one and ask for brief updates from the psychiatrist after each visit.

STEP 6.
Determine what level of observation your loved one will be on. Don’t be afraid to remind staff that 15 minutes will not be enough to prevent a suicide.

STEP 7.
Ask if there is a bathroom door inside a patient’s room. This is where patients most often hang themselves using a sheet or clothing over the door.

STEP 8.
Ask how often your loved one will be properly assessed for suicidal thinking and how staff monitors for behavioral signs and symptoms of suicide.

STEP 9.
Discuss all changes to suicide watch protection with staff members. Your opinion matters when it comes to the safety of a loved one.

STEP 10.
If a staff member acts rude to you, speak to their supervisor immediately. Patient relationships are a risk factor for suicide.

STEP 11.
Find out how many suicides have occurred in the hospital over the past five years and emergency procedures the hospital has in place to prevent inpatient suicide.

STEP 12.
Make sure you are part of the discharge process. If you don’t feel a loved one is ready for discharge, speak up.

STEP 13.
If staff members are discharging a loved one, speak to the CEO of the hospital to prevent the discharge or bring a loved one back to the hospital.

STEP 14.
If your loved one’s transition to outpatient care is inadequate and your loved one is at risk of suicide, call 911 to report your loved one is suicidal and being discharged against your will.

STEP 15.
If you no longer live in the area your loved one is discharged to, make sure your loved one’s transition to outpatient care is smooth and immediate. Post-discharge is a dangerous and high-risk time for suicide attempts.

STEP 16.
If you have a firearm, make sure it is secured in your home, your car, and your relative’s home and car. Do not give one a gun if hiding it is in your relative’s apartment.

A suicide attorney can help obtain the compensation you deserve if you’ve lost a loved one due to inpatient suicide. Contact the THE LAW OFFICES OF SKIP SIMPSON Attorneys and Counselors today at 214-618-8222 for a free case consultation.

Sources