

Assessment and Referral

What are Assessment and Referral Services?

Assessment and referral is a hospital-based mental health service that responds to patients experiencing a crisis related to mental health or addiction. Services are provided in the Emergency Department (ED) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What Can You Expect?

If you are experiencing a mental health or substance abuse crisis related to mental health or addiction and have come to the ED, you will likely be referred to an assessment and referral mental health care provider for a consultation. This mental health care provider will do a risk assessment and give recommendations for your care to the ED health care provider.

During your assessment, the mental health care provider will meet with you and anyone who has come with you face-to-face, in person or through Telehealth Service to assess how severe your crisis is and to help your ED health care provider determine the right level of care for you. Meeting with the mental health care provider does not mean you will need to stay in the hospital.

If a child or adolescent is being assessed, family or guardian involvement is important. A parent or guardian must stay in the ED during the assessment process.

How Long Will the Assessment Take?

The time you stay in the ED will vary for each person. Staff members are helping a variety of patients who are experiencing medical and mental health emergencies. Assessment and referral mental health care providers often consult with on-call psychiatrists, outpatient health care providers and other community agencies.

What Will Happen When the Assessment is Done?

Once the assessment is done, a plan will be made with your ED health care providers to help you receive the right level of care. The possibilities may include:

- admission to the hospital
- transfer to another hospital
- return home with a crisis plan in place
- referral to a mental health care provider at an outpatient clinic
- referral to a day treatment or partial hospital program
- information about additional resources.

It is important to know that even though you may feel overwhelmed with mental health or addiction concerns, being admitted to the hospital may not be the best solution. An assessment and referral mental health care provider will talk with you about your options.