



Faster Transfer, Better Care:

How collaboration between Mercy Health — Springfield Regional Medical Center and Conduit streamlined behavioral health patient transfers



Challenge:

Healthcare systems across the nation face significant hurdles in delivering effective treatment for behavioral health (BH) patients, particularly those grappling with suicidal ideations.

In many cases, patients can be stuck waiting in the emergency department (ED) for days while social workers and clinicians work to identify an accepting facility. Boarding in the emergency department not only impacts the ED throughput and safety but is resource intensive, often requiring a constant observer, increasing the overall cost of care. In addition, the emotional toll on ED staff is profound, as they lack adequate support and tools to deliver optimal care under these circumstances.

Most importantly, EDs are not designed for extended patient stays, lacking the safe and therapeutic environment to care for BH patients. Recognizing these challenges, Mercy Health — Springfield Regional Medical Center initiated an interdisciplinary discovery workshop to understand the barriers to care and safety for behavioral health patients with suicidal ideations. One such barrier identified was the patient transfer process.

Solution:

Mercy Health — Springfield Regional Medical Center opted to focus on streamlining the transfer process and improving communication to get patients to the next phase of their care as quickly as possible. To achieve this goal, Mercy Health sought the collaboration of Conduit Health Partners.

Adopting a mindset of process improvement, the teams embarked on a pilot initiative to revamp the workflow for behavioral health patient transfers from the ED. This involved the development of a transfer checklist to help move patients to their behavioral health destination in a timely manner. Clinicians could efficiently complete the checklist at the bedside and generate an electronic bed request in EPIC, initiating Conduit's involvement. Ideally, the first communication between Conduit and the ED conveyed transfer details, leveraging the upfront information to streamline processes and alleviate time and frustrations for ED staff. This approach not only fostered consistency but also centralized information, ultimately enhancing patient safety.

Results:

Empowered by data-driven insights provided by Conduit, Mercy Health gained a valuable understanding of the pilot's efficacy.

The implementation of the pilot program yielded remarkable outcomes including:

64%

reduction in ED length of stay

17%

(or 2.3 calls per day) reduction in average phone calls from Conduit to the ED

50

second per call reduction in talk time during the calls

As a result of the operational efficiencies and improvements to the quality of care, Mercy Health — Springfield Regional Medical Center has expanded the pilot. Additionally, their parent organization, Bon Secours Mercy Health, plans to roll out this innovative workflow to several other hospitals in 2024. By prioritizing standardization and collaboration, this initiative offers hope for health care systems nationwide grappling with similar challenges.