

Student Hospitalization and Aftercare Guide



Neenah Joint School District
Neenah, Wisconsin

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This booklet will let you know what to expect when your student is hospitalized as well as give you suggestions and tips for during and after your stay. **It's never too early to contact your school counselor.** All of us at Neenah Joint School District want what is best for our students. The more information we have, the better we can help make a plan to make sure there is support at school.



When Should I Take My Child to the Hospital?

It can be a confusing and difficult decision to go to a hospital for mental health reasons. However, if your child is experiencing intense emotions or is at risk for harming him or herself or others, the hospital is the right place to be.

Here are some signs that would indicate serious consideration for admitting your child to a hospital or calling 911:

- 1. Talking about or making plans for suicide**
- 2. Expressing hopelessness about the future**
- 3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress**
- 4. Showing worrisome behavioral cues or marked changes in behavior, particularly in the presence of the warning signs above. Specifically, this includes significant:**
 - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situations*
 - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)*
 - Anger or hostility that seem out of character or out of context*
 - Recent increased agitation or irritability*

How to Respond

- 1. Ask if s/he is OK, and ask if s/he is having thoughts of suicide**
- 2. Express your concern about what you are observing in his/her behavior**
- 3. Listen attentively and non-judgmentally**
- 4. Reflect what was shared and ask if your child has felt heard**
- 5. Tell your child s/he is not alone. Do NOT leave her or him alone!**
- 6. Share that there are treatments available that can help**
- 7. If either of you are concerned, call (920) 722-7707 to talk to a crisis counselor.**

Source: <https://www.youthsuicidewarningsigns.org/>

What Can I Expect When I Arrive at the Hospital?

Once You Have Decided to Go to the Hospital....

- You may want to bring some of the following items:
 - Medication list
 - Health insurance cards and picture identification
 - Eyeglasses or contact lenses
 - Pajamas/robe
 - Slippers or shoes w/out laces
 - Toothpaste, toothbrush, brush, and deodorant
 - Snacks
 - Clothes for 3-4 days
 - NO jewelry, piercings, or electronic devices will be allowed
- You will go to the emergency room (ER) of the hospital. The closest hospital with a unit for children is at St. Elizabeth's in Appleton. You may want to call ahead to see if there are beds available and to ask them for advice if there are not beds available.

At the Hospital....

- Admittance will take down your information and insurance in the ER and run lab tests. This could take an hour or two. The legal guardian or parent must be present for admission. ERs can be busy, however, feel free to check with the front desk if your wait is longer than an hour.
- The ER will conduct lab tests and do assessments. Based on the assessment, you will either go to the Behavioral Unit or you will be released after a safety plan has been developed.

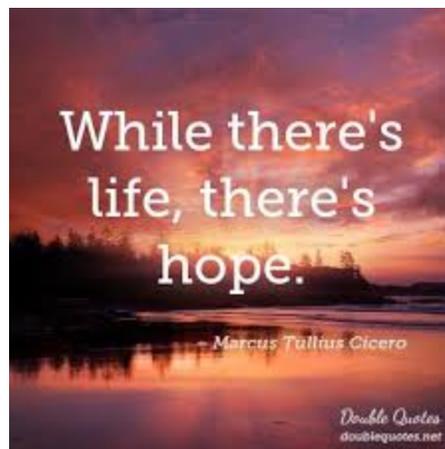
After You Have Been Admitted....

- A staff member or nurse will come to interview you. If you are waiting for a couple hours, ask the staff about this.
- An average stay is between 5-7 days. This gives the student enough time to address what brought them to the hospital and to come up with ways to stay safe.

- Your nurse will be checking in with you several times a day. If you have questions, you can ask your nurse. Nurses change shifts, which mean that times during the day (or night) another nurse will be assigned to you. The new nurse will introduce him or herself at the start of the shift.
- You may attend groups while you are there.
- You and your caregiver will meet with a psychiatrist.
 - The psychiatrist will ask questions to determine what concerns you are experiencing.
 - The psychiatrist will also talk to you about medications you are taking and determine what medications and what dosage would be helpful.
 - It might help to write down as much as you can about what has brought you to the hospital so the psychiatrist can determine how best to help you.
- While at the hospital you will meet other patients. It might be helpful to talk to other patients and realize you are not alone with what you have been going through. However, if you need quiet time alone, do not hesitate to tell the other patients you will talk to them later.

At the end of your hospital stay...

- A social worker will meet with you and your caregiver to discuss the discharge process, which may include referrals to community resources.
- You will be given a copy of your discharge plan, which you will help create.
- It may be a good idea to share the discharge plan with your school counselor or school social worker so that they can transition you back to school.



It's OK to Ask Questions

YOU are the most important member of your treatment team. You are the best person to advocate on your behalf.

It's okay to ask questions ANYTIME, even if you ask questions more than once. You have the right to ask questions. Sometimes different professionals will give different answers which can be confusing. That's because information may be based on opinions about you and YOU will want to decide what information is most helpful to you. If you feel confused, ask someone you trust to help take notes.

An Example of Patient Rights and Responsibilities:

<https://www.semc.org/patient-visitor-information/policies/patient-rights-responsibilities>

Here are some questions to think about asking:

- Why am I here?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- How long will it take until I start feeling better?
- What should I tell my family or friends about my hospitalization?
- What am I going to do while I'm here?
- What should I do if I feel [bored, scared, confused, sad, frustrated]? Who can I talk to?
- How can I cope with my emotions while I'm here?
- What are the rules here?
- What about my classes? Should I contact someone at school?
- What will it be like for me when I leave here?
- What is my diagnosis?
- What treatments are available for my diagnosis?
- For parents, feel free to ask about obtaining records, discharge plans, and any other information you would want to know to help your child.

Who Is on my Team?

Take some time to fill in those people who have helped during this time and have been there for you in the past. Not all of these categories may apply, so feel free to leave those blank.

- Who is on my team at the hospital? (write these in)

- Psychiatrist _____
- Social Worker _____
- Psychologist/Counselor _____
- Nurse(s) _____
- Attending Physician _____

- Who is on my team at school?

- School Counselor _____
- School Social Worker _____
- Principal(s) _____
- Teacher(s) _____
- School Nurse _____

- Who is on my mental health team in the community?

- Primary Care Physician _____
- Counselor/therapist _____
- Case Manager _____
- Psychiatrist _____

- Whom Can I Reach Out to For Support?

- Parent/Caregiver(s) _____
- Family Member(s) _____
- Positive Friends _____
- Religious/Spiritual _____
- Mentor(s) _____

Hospital Staff Roles

- **Psychiatrist:** This is a physician who specializes in mental well-being. A psychiatrist will be ordering and monitoring any medications that you will be on. The psychiatrist may also order other assessments to help determine what would be helpful to you.
- **Social Workers:** The social work staff can help you with communicating with your family and/or friends. They can also help you when contacting the school. Sometimes social workers hold family meetings. They will work with you on discharge plans and follow-up care.
- **Psychologists and Counselors:** Sometimes you will hear a psychologist or a counselor be called a “therapist”. These professionals provide individual counseling and assessment.
- **Nurses:** Nurses provide on-going, daily care including giving you your medication and making sure that you understand the care you are receiving. Nurses coordinate all of your care and communicate information to your doctors and other team members about your progress. They also provide some counseling and support and can answer most of your questions. A specific nurse is always assigned to your care.
- **Attending Physician:** This is the physician in charge of your care, medical health and well-being. The attending physician will monitor progress and ask other staff how you are doing. This physician may also order tests for you.

If you are uncertain who someone is and what role they have, please ask your nurse.

What Do I Say to My Family and Friends?

You may want to talk with friends and family while you are in the hospital. There may be good reasons for you not to have access to your phone during your stay. However, if you do talk with someone, you may want to consider the following:

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

Who would I want to talk to?

What do I want to talk about? What is my purpose for wanting to talk to that person?

This is how I feel about contacting that person.

What would be hard to talk about with that person?

What would be helpful to talk about with that person?

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

These are the most important things that we talked about.....

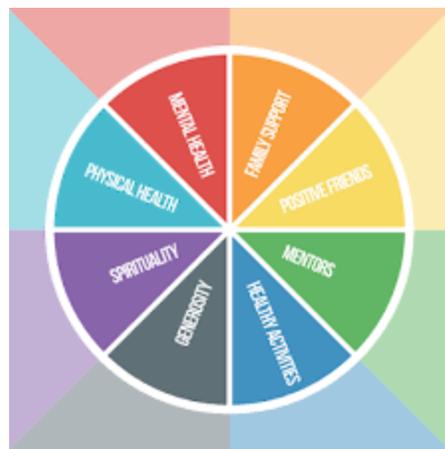
This is what I think about the conversation....

Now I feel....

My Sources of Strength

Getting help is a sign of courage and strength. Every human being needs help from time to time. Being in the hospital is an opportunity to get help and work to make your life better and healthier. You have the opportunity to reach out to your treatment team and to the people in your life who care about you so you can accomplish your goals.

The Sources of Strength Wheel below is a reminder of those things in your life that will help you to be better. Which ones do you most use? What are some things you can list under your most used strengths (e.g., talking to my sister helps; pray; yoga; take my meds regularly; write down what I'm grateful for today, set goals w/ my therapist, etc.)?



List as many things as you can under each category that help you in your toughest times

- Mental Health
- Family Support
- Positive Friends
- Mentors
- Healthy Activities
- Generosity
- Spirituality
- Physical Health

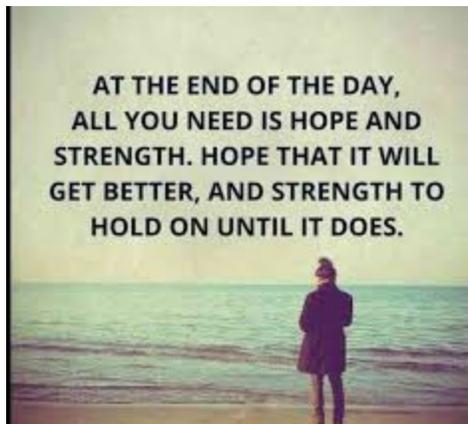
Getting Better and Moving Forward

Kevin Hines is an internationally recognized speaker who lives with a serious mental illness. He also survived a suicide attempt. In his book Cracked, Not Broken, he writes about “The Art of Living Well--Most Days” where he candidly and honestly talks about what it takes to learn ways to manage mental health concerns while also facing the challenge of staying well...on most days. What is his secret? It’s finding a routine that works. And it’s focusing on getting better. Here are some of his suggestions:

- Therapy--Participate in therapy and find a therapist that works for you. You may need to find a type of therapy that works best for what your specific concerns are.
- Medication--Take it with 100% accuracy at the same time everyday. This is the best way to get the maximum benefit and/or see if you need to change dosage or medications.
- Exercise--Routine cardio or strength training help the brain and the body. If you don’t put gas in the car, it won’t run. So get out there and do something...anything to get going.
- Sleep--Get at least 8 hours. Turn off electronic devices an hour before bed. Keep the room dark and cool.
- Food--To heal mentally, you need a healthy diet. Eat good, nutritious foods most of the time. Keep hydrated by adding water to your regular routines.
- Education--Find out as much as you can about your diagnosis. And educate your family and friends too.
- Refrain from using alcohol or other drugs--Drinking weakens your brain’s ability to function properly or to learn better coping skills. Drinking while taking medications will decrease their effectiveness. Using other drugs, including vaping, will also change your mood in artificial ways and keep your brain from working at its best.
- Identify Personal Protectors--Personal protectors are people in your life who truly care about you and are willing to spend significant time with you when you need

them. Let them know what you need when you get really distressed. Do this BEFORE you get really distressed so they can be prepared.

- Things to remember (from Kevin Hines):
 - You are here for a reason. Find your purpose. Find the meaning of being able to share your understanding of your mental issues to help others.
 - Learn the signs of suicidal thoughts and planning, so you can help yourself and others get to the help needed.
 - Get on track with your treatment plan. Follow it 100%. Do not wait in denial.
 - Reach out to personal protectors and let them help you get the help you need.
 - Get out and fight discrimination. Don't let others mock or trivialize those with mental health issues.
 - Your great emotional pain is not permanent.
 - Forgive yourself for any wrongs you feel you've done
 - You are not alone.
 - You are human, you are not your condition. You live with a mental illness, but you are so much more than your mental illness.
 - There is hope.



Medications and Pharmacy Information

Medication	Dosage	When to Take It	Side Effects I've Noticed

Pharmacy: _____

Phone Number: _____

Possible Side Effects Mentioned: _____

If I have the following side effects, I must get medical attention IMMEDIATELY:

Getting Back to School

Once leaving the hospital, it may feel overwhelming to get back to your regular (and probably busy) schedule. Feeling overwhelmed during transition is normal. The most important thing you can do now is to take care of yourself. This is a time to be good to yourself. You will have setbacks, but you will get back into your regular routine.

You will want to have a meeting with your school counselor or school social worker as soon as you return to school to help transition you back into your classes. Make sure a release of information is made between the hospital and your school so your support is there for you when you return to school.

Here are some things that may ease the transition:

- Make a list of your courses and get in touch with your school counselor about contacting your teachers.
- Make sure your caregiver/parent makes attendance aware that you were out of school for medical reasons. Get a note from your doctor as well.
- It is helpful to sign a Release of Information (ROI) with the hospital to allow your school social worker and/or school counselor access to your medical records. Sign this as soon as possible. This can help the school staff with your transition back to classes.
- You may also want to plan out what you would like to say to your teachers and your peers. Your school counselor can help you with this.
- Remember, you do not have to give out information about why you were hospitalized if you don't want to.
- You may want to discuss a plan to help you adjust back to school:
 - [Secondary Emotional Regulation Plan](#)
 - [3-5 Emotional Regulation Plan](#)
 - [K-2 Emotional Regulation Plan](#)

Resources

Contact Mental Health Coordinator at NJSD, Mike Altekruise 920-751-6800 ext. 10123 for resource referrals

Always call 911 if a person is in immediate danger of harming self or others

- NEW Mental Health Connection <http://foxcities.wi.networkofcare.org/mh/>
 - Local Mental Health Resources in the Fox Valley

- National Mental Health Search Site from SAMHSA
<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

- **[Suicide prevention lifeline https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/)**
 - **Call or text 988**
 - Free and confidential support for people in distress, 24/7.

- **[National Helpline https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)**
 - **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**
 - Treatment referral and information, 24/7.

- **[Disaster Distress Helpline https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)**
 - **1-800-985-5990**
 - Immediate crisis counseling related to disasters, 24/7.