

# **Mental Illness and the Family:**

## **Part III: Is Hospitalization Necessary?**

Of the 5.4 million people who sought mental health treatment in 1990, less than 7% required hospitalization. More than half of those who needed inpatient-care had schizophrenia, one of the most severe forms of mental illness. If you or someone you know may have a mental illness, the chances are that you will not need hospitalization. But, if you do, the following information will help assure you of the best care possible.

### **Questions To Ask:**

- Has the person been professionally evaluated? By whom? Do I understand the diagnosis?
- If the patient has not been evaluated, why am I seeking admission for the person?
  - a) A doctor's recommendation?
  - b) Need to have patient removed from family situation? Why? Because of behavioral problems?
  - c) What are they? Because family cannot care for him or her? Why?
  - d) What symptoms is the patient exhibiting which cause concern?

### **The Hospital/Treatment Center At Check-In:**

- Does your facility treat patients only for this specific diagnosis?
- If the patient has other health or emotional problems will he/she receive treatment for these problems also?
- Does your facility require tests when admitted? If so, what are they?
- Who will perform these tests?
- Who will evaluate the patient when he/she is admitted?
- What are the person's qualifications/ title?
- Will this person continue to treat the patient?
- Will the patient be seen by this professional on a regular basis?
- When will the initial evaluation take place?

### **During the Patient's Stay:**

- When can I (or another family member) talk to the therapist or doctor?
- Will we be able to discuss treatment with the doctor or therapist? When? How often?
- When can family members visit? For how long?
- Will the patient be allowed to receive phone calls?
- Will the patient have a daily schedule of activities or treatments?
- If so, what activities will the patient be involved in?
- Is therapy group or private and is it part of the treatment plan?
- What clothes should the patient bring?
- How long will the patient be at the facility?
- Who makes this decision?
- Will the family be advised of changes in treatment?

- Who will make the evaluation for discharging the patient? When will this happen?

### **Leaving The Hospital:**

- Will someone advise the patient and family about adjustment concerns such as the need for further counseling or a medication schedule?
- What can we expect when the patient is discharged?
- Will he/she be on medications? Which ones?
- How will these medications help? Are they habit-forming? What are the side effects? What is the dosage?
- How long will the patient have to take this medication?
- If the patient leaves the hospital without permission how will the hospital handle this?
  - If this occurs, what is the parent or family's responsibility?
- Will the patient be able to continue school work while in the hospital? Or how soon after he or she is discharged?
  - If classes are offered to patients, what are they and who teaches them?
- What follow-up treatment or support group options should the family and patient consider?

### **Financial And Insurance Issues:**

*Ask the treatment center and/or insurance company the following questions:*

- Does the hospital accept this type of insurance? If not, what are the alternatives? If it does, what is covered?
- Can coverage be reviewed with a member of the staff?
- Are there separate charges and how much are they for physicians, therapists or care-takers? What may these separate charges be?
- How are fees assessed?
- When will billing occur?
- If insurance only covers part of the cost, what other arrangements can be made for payments?
- Is there other assistance available? Will the facility accept partial payments or payments on a schedule?

### **Ask The Therapist:**

*What can the patient and family expect during the treatment process?*

- What can be the expected reactions/behaviors of the patient?
- How should the family respond?
- How can the patient and family prepare for unexpected behavior and possible setbacks?

**Source:** <http://www.nmha.org>