

Demolition to a Safe Zone

Hansen Family Hospital Emergency Department | Iowa Falls, IA

Objective

To positively impact patient care and increase security measures for patients, visitors, and colleagues by updating the layout of our Emergency Services Department and eliminating safety gaps.

Background

Over the past few years, our organization has experienced an overall increase in traffic to our emergency department, including patients in need of mental health services. Some of these visits have escalated and resulted in aggressive and violent behavior directed at staff and facility equipment. Through our commitment to patient and colleague safety, it was imperative that changes were necessary to increase security measures not only to protect patients and staff, but to allow for emergency care to continue without interruption or delay.

Actions Taken

Increased security measures:

- Registration entryway enclosed with secure badge access to waiting area (must be badged by staff for entry)
- Registration desk enclosed with locked doors and glass barriers; badge access required for entry
- Additional camera installed in vestibule, increasing sightline and providing better visibility of traffic entering/exiting the facility
- Nurses' station enclosed with locked doors and glass barriers; badge access required for entry
- Enclosed staff emergency exit through nurses' station via provider lounge
- Panic button installed at both registration desk and nurses' station

Increased safety measures:

- Enhanced anti-ligature patient room equipped with safety mechanisms
 - Additional emergency staff exit (through badge access)
- Patient Restroom: New grab rails installed, plumbing updated to be ligature resistant

Metrics

2020

Total ES visits: 4,344
Mental Health visits: 116

2021

Total ES visits: 5,027
Mental Health visits: 140

2022

Total ES visits: 5,827
Mental Health visits: 147



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Analysis

A committee was formed to address concerns regarding patient and staff safety and to determine what steps were necessary to positively impact patient care. Staff from each patient touchpoint contributed to the redesign and identified safety gaps based on their own experiences along with analyzing the recent numbers supporting an increase in mental health and overall emergency care visits.

Next Steps

- Continuous review of standard work and patient care processes for improvement opportunities
- Schedule regular staff meetings in an effort to maintain a direct line of communication as well as address concerns as they occur to prevent delays in care
- Arrange regular staff trainings to gain additional skills and exercise their current knowledge and skillset
- Review patient feedback through various channels of communication

