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# Family Huddle Newsletter



## Mental Health and Substance Use Family Support Services

Tips and resources for people who want to be more effective in supporting adults with mental health/substance use concerns.

### MESSAGE FROM YOUR HOST



Hello.

This month's topic is about the Mental Health Act and how it applies when there is a hospitalization for a psychiatric illness. Whether you are supporting your loved one in a voluntary or involuntary hospitalization, it is a crisis period. It may be a time when you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, disheartened and confused. There are a lot of things that need to be done when your loved one is admitted into the hospital and all the while attending to your own feelings and needs. It is a time when you will find yourself 'caregiving' as your loved one may not have the cognitive capacity to take care of themselves.

Supporting a loved one through a hospitalization is easier when you understand the system you are trying to navigate.

In this edition you will learn information that will make it easier for you to support your loved one through a hospitalization. There is a lot information which is why this topic will be spread out over two editions. This month you will learn about the Mental Health Act as it applies when your loved one needs to be taken to the hospital. In April's issue you will learn about how the Mental Health Act applies when your loved one has been admitted into the hospital.

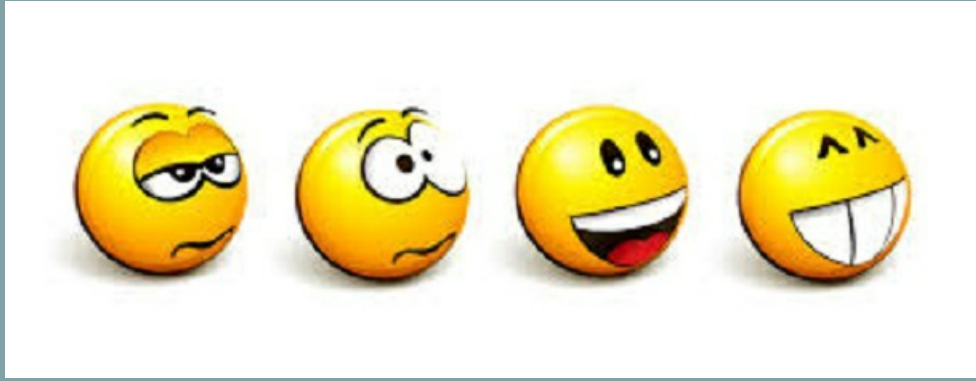
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### **Prior to hospitalization: Signs of relapse**

At this stage you may be noticing your loved one acting in ways that causes you concern. It may be your loved one is expressing suicidal ideation, acting bizarrely, not making sense, becoming highly irritable and/or argumentative, withdrawn and not attending to their basic needs. Most of you will know when things are not just right and it is at this moment you are seeking help and direction from the mental health professionals.

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## How to convince your loved one to go to the emergency department voluntarily

This is a tricky question and one we often help families navigate. Here are some important key reminders

1. Express your genuine concern and worry about the behaviours you are seeing.
2. Express that the hospital is a safe place where they can get well
3. Reduce the stigma. Let your loved one know it's no different than someone with a physical health problem like having a heart attack.
4. Help with packing a bag and transportation. Agree to sit with them, or someone else of their choice, while waiting in the emergency room
5. Help your loved one figure out a plan for pet sitting if this is needed.
6. If they do not agree to go voluntarily, then your option is to initiate an involuntary hospitalization.

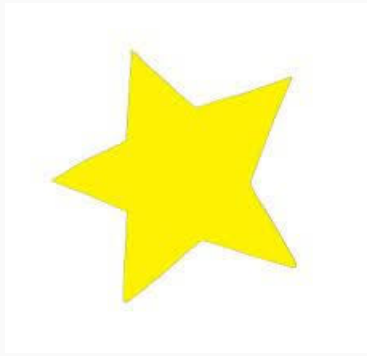
(adapted from [http://www.vch.ca/Pages/What-happens-at-the-Emergency-Department.aspx?res\\_id=1401](http://www.vch.ca/Pages/What-happens-at-the-Emergency-Department.aspx?res_id=1401))

**Remember, a voluntary hospitalization is ideal, but not always possible.**

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### There are 3 ways to have someone involuntarily admitted

1. By police
2. By a court order
3. By a director of a designated facility (this can be a family doctor or a psychiatrist)



### **The police**

If your loved one does not agree to go to the hospital voluntarily, then you have the option of calling the police to assist with the hospitalization. You can ask they send a plain clothed officer, in a unmarked car. The police will try to honour this request but it may not always be possible. When the police arrive at the home they will ask a series of questions as they assess the urgency of the situation. The final decision rests with the police and it is based on the Emergency procedures of section 28 of the BC Mental Health Act. What is helpful to know about Section 28 is that the criteria under Section 28 is restrictive. If police decide your loved one meets the criteria for Section 28, police take on the responsibility to ensure your loved one receives an examination by a doctor. Once your loved one has been examined by the attending emergency room doctor the role of the police ends.



### **Section 28**

A police officer or constable may apprehend and immediately take your loved one to a doctor for examination if satisfied from their observations, or information received from you, that your loved one

(a) is acting in a manner likely to endanger their own safety or the safety of others, and

(b) is apparently a person with a mental disorder.

(Copied from the BC Mental Health Act )



### **The courts**

You have an option of going to your local courthouse to seek an order or warrant, from a judge or Justice of the Peace, if the police have been unable to apprehend under Section 28 of the Mental Health Act. The difference between the two is that when you seek an order from the courts, the judge also takes into consideration your loved one's mental or physical deterioration if treatment is delayed. The order by the judge overrides the criteria of Section 28.

At the courthouse, you will ask the court clerk for Form 9 – (Application for Warrant – Apprehension of Person with Apparent Mental Disorder for Purpose of Examination) and ask to see the judge. Form 9 is in Appendix 16 and the courts will have this form. The clerk will give you an appointment time to see the judge in a court room.

If the judge grants you the warrant, the police must pick up your loved one and take them to the hospital for medical examination. This order is good for 48 hours. This forces your loved to stay at the hospital until they are seen by a medical doctor.



### **The director**

The director can be your family doctor, psychiatrist or other medical examiner. The director will initiate the involuntary process by filling out a Director's Warrant, which overrides Section 28. Now the police have to pick up your loved one and take them to the emergency room for a medical examination. This is also good for 48 hours.

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## **How one becomes certified under the Mental Health Act.**

When your loved one has been taken to the hospital by the police--be it by an order from the courts, Section 28, or a Director's Warrant-- your loved one is only temporarily held under the Mental Health Act for 48 hours. During the 48 hours the emergency room doctor will apply the involuntary admission criteria and, if the criteria are met, will fill out a Medical Certificate.

Two (2) Medical Certificates need to be filled out for your loved one to be admitted as an involuntary patient under the Mental Health Act. The 2 Medical Certificates (also called Form 4's) can be found on the internet.

The first Medical Certificate (Form 4) is good for 48 hours. During that time the doctor calls the on-call psychiatrist who will also examine your loved one to see if they fit the criteria for the second Medical Certificate (second Form 4). If the second Medical Certificate is signed, your loved one is now involuntarily admitted and will be moved out of the emergency room and given a bed on the in--patient psychiatric unit. The second certificate is good for 1 month. This means your loved one is held at the hospital, against their will, as per the certificate by the BC Mental Health Act for 1 month or until they are de-certified by the treating psychiatrist.

Often, when someone has been certified, mental health staff say they have been "pinked". The 2 certificates are referred to as Pinks, because they are on pink paper. If you hear the staff say "they got their first pink", that means they received their first Medical Certificate (or Form 4).

(Adapted from BC's Mental Health Act in Plain Language & Guide to the Mental Health Act, 2005 Edition )



## Involuntary hospitalization facts

1. Section 28 is one way to be brought to the hospital under BC's Mental Health Act.
    2. Section 28 is restrictive
  3. An order from the courts and Section 28 can hold your loved one in hospital for up to 48 hours
    3. (2) Medical Certificates need to be signed to initiate an involuntary hospitalization
    4. It is best to try to convince your loved one to go the hospital voluntarily
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# RESOURCES

## **What Happens At the Emergency Department**

[http://www.vch.ca/Pages/What-happens-at-the-Emergency-Department.aspx?res\\_id=1401](http://www.vch.ca/Pages/What-happens-at-the-Emergency-Department.aspx?res_id=1401)

## **BC Mental Health Act in Plain Language**

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/health-care-partners/colleges-board-and-commissions/mental-health-review-board/mha\\_plain.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/health-care-partners/colleges-board-and-commissions/mental-health-review-board/mha_plain.pdf)

## **Mental Health Act Guide**

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2005/MentalHealthGuide.pdf>

## **Video explaining BC Mental Health Act**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKljWebCoqk>



## Reflective Box

### Helpful Hospital Check List

1

Know your loved ones doctor's names and contact numbers

2

Know the medications they are on, or supposed to be on.

3

Know the name of the pharmacist and their contact number.

4

Call the case manager at the mental health centre, if your loved one is already connected to it, to inform them of the hospitalization

5

Prepare a relapse time line to give to the medical staff when your loved one is taken to the hospital

6

Help your loved one have a hospital bag prepacked if your loved one has been unwell for a length of time.

7

Help your loved one make a plan, before hand, for pet care. This may help your loved one make a decision about going to the hospital.

8

Talk to your loved one about rent, when it's due, and how it will be paid while in hospital.

9

Talk to your loved one about whom they want to tell about the hospitalization, and how they want them informed.



## New Support Groups

FSS will be starting two new monthly support groups in Port Coquitlam and Surrey.

Please contact our program for more information if you are interested in attending our monthly support groups.

## Family Support Events

## CONTACT

Mental Health and Substance Use Family Support Services

Monday-Thursday  
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
(hours vary to include evening)

1 (833) 898-6200

## Are you in a crisis?

Call the Fraser Health crisis line:

**604-951-8855** or **1-877-820-7411** (toll-free)

Trained volunteers provide emotional crisis support,  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



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