

# Quality Report Card

Licking Memorial Health Systems



Volume 25, Issue 6

JUNE 2024

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

## Suicide Warning Signs

Suicide is a serious public health problem with far-reaching social, emotional, and economic consequences. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults, and rates have risen steadily in the last two decades. In 2022, suicide rates reached the highest point since 1941. While there is no single cause for the increase in suicide rates in the United States, experts point to several factors, including increased isolation and loneliness among young people, the opioid crisis, economic stress, social media use, and access to firearms.

People who are contemplating suicide may show warning signs that they are thinking about or planning a suicide attempt. Such signs may include talking about:

- Death or exhibiting a fascination with death
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or trapped
- Feeling guilt, shame, or anger
- Feeling as if they are a burden to others

Other warning signs may include changes in behavior or mood, such as:

- Increased alcohol or drug use
- A recent episode of depression, emotional distress, or anxiety
- Losing interest in personal appearance or hygiene
- Losing interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or community
- Saying goodbye to family and friends

- Giving away prized possessions
- A recent suicide attempt
- Changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns
- Becoming violent or being a victim of violence
- Expressing rage or acting reckless

Suicide is not a normal response to stress. Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and should not be ignored. People who receive support from family and friends and have access to mental health services are less likely to act on their suicidal ideations. Individuals who observe warning signs in a friend or loved one can let the person know they are concerned. Ask if the person is having thoughts about suicide. Listen attentively and without judgement, and let the person know they are cared for and supported. Offer to connect them with a mental health professional.

Some behaviors require immediate action. A person who is in crisis may be threatening to harm themselves, talking about suicide, or planning a suicide attempt. Individuals who observe these behaviors should call 911 right away. Stay with the person and keep them as calm as possible. Remove sharp objects or anything that the person could use to hurt themselves.

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the

United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices.

Licking Memorial Behavioral Health Services offers assistance for those experiencing mental health issues. Physician services in general psychiatry are available and include comprehensive assessments, as well as ongoing treatment and medication management when appropriate. The physicians consult with the primary care providers and specialists.



# Patient Story – Mandy\*

Struggling with mental health issues such as depression and anxiety began in childhood for Mandy. She felt she had to hide her feelings and that her emotions did not matter. As she matured, Mandy's mental health declined significantly and she sought assistance from a therapist. She was prescribed medication, which alleviated some of the symptoms, but she continued to experience extreme reactions to stress from her work. The anxiety and depression became overwhelming and she quit her job working as a telephone customer service representative. Soon after taking a new job in Newark, Mandy again began feeling depressed and anxious. Suicidal thoughts soon grew overwhelming.

"I kept having thoughts that everyone would be better off without me. That the world would be a better place if I were not here," Mandy shared. "I began thinking of ways to end my life and making plans. I received three months worth of my medication at once and convinced myself that it would be easy to overdose on that medication. I knew I was in trouble, so I finally reached out for help."

Mandy called the office of Psychiatrist Elizabeth A. Yoder, D.O. Dr. Yoder advised her to leave work and visit the Licking Memorial Hospital (LMH) Emergency Department (ED) immediately.

"The staff in the Emergency Department were amazing. As soon as I told them why I was there, they moved quickly to place me in a safe room and talk with me," Mandy remembered. "They took the situation very seriously, and their action showed me that someone did care about me, and wanted to help."

In 2019, LMH renovated four rooms specifically designed for patients who are exhibiting suicidal thoughts or behaviors. A separate entrance to the safe rooms provides a private setting for patients experiencing a mental health crisis. The isolation offers decreased stimuli from the rest of the ED, which helps the patient remain calm. A licensed social worker performs a comprehensive assessment of the patient to evaluate the severity of suicide risk and recommend appropriate treatment, such as a safety plan coupled with outpatient services or hospitalization. After her assessment, Mandy was admitted to Shepherd Hill.

"The first night was very rough. I was not in a good head space and did not feel well. I kept thinking that I did not want to be here on this earth," Mandy said. "The staff was incredibly kind to me. They treated me with respect, and I never felt judged. Over the next few days, I began to feel so much better. Staff members, including Jim Pfister, spent time talking to me while others engaged my attention with art, games, and puzzles. Everyone demonstrates a strong level of caring and kindness."

While at Shepherd Hill, the staff also assisted with medication adjustments to assure Mandy was taking the proper dose. After returning home, Mandy did feel better for a short time; however, she was readmitted twice more. After more adjustments to her medication and therapy sessions with Dr. Yoder, Mandy has been successful in overcoming the suicidal thoughts.

"It has been nearly a year since I have had a suicidal thought, and I feel more like myself," Mandy expressed. "Dr. Yoder is very intelligent and is able to set anyone at ease. You can tell her anything. She

has helped me heal and to put things in perspective. It has been a long road, but I am stronger and healthier for the effort."

"Talking with others who have experienced the same struggle with suicidal thoughts, I began to consider how my actions would impact those around me," said Mandy. "The question was posed – what if you had to watch your family live everyday after you died by suicide? I do not think that I could tolerate seeing the pain I had caused. I also now believe that I would instantly regret the decision to follow-through with a suicide attempt."

"For family members, I understand that watching a loved one battle depression can be difficult. Sometimes, it is easier to ignore the warning signs and believe the situation is not as serious as it is," Mandy commented. "Please do not ignore someone struggling with suicidal thoughts. Your reaction to them could be the difference between life and death. Everyone has the ability to brighten someone's day. Simply smiling, saying hello, or being kind can demonstrate to a person feeling alone and lost that someone does care about them."

Licking Memorial Outpatient Psychiatric Services includes physician services of general psychiatry. The physicians provide comprehensive assessments in the specialty of psychiatry, as well as ongoing treatment and medication management when appropriate. They consult with the primary care providers and specialists, and make referrals to individual or group therapy when appropriate. For physician office services, call (220) 564-4873. If you are in need of immediate help, call 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

\*Mandy is not the patient's real name.

# Behavioral Health Care – *How do we compare?*

At Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS), we take pride in the care we provide. To monitor the quality of that care, we track specific quality measures and compare to benchmark measures. Then, we publish the information so you can draw your own conclusions regarding your healthcare choices.

- Behavioral health is a broad term that refers to psychiatric illnesses and/or substance use disorders. Inpatient hospitalization for either condition is often necessary for effective intervention. LMH provides a wide range of services for people with behavioral health illnesses at its Shepherd Hill facility. One goal is to transition patients into outpatient settings where they can continue treatment, decreasing the need for readmission.

	LMH 2021	LMH 2022	LMH 2023	National <sup>(1)</sup>
Behavioral Health patients readmitted within 7 days	0.9%	1.3%	2.4%	1.4%

- Outcome studies are conducted to monitor and measure the treatment success of addictive disease. Our data shows how patients are doing up to two years after completing the program. Information regarding abstinence one year after completing the program is self-reported by patients.

	LMH 2021	LMH 2022	LMH 2023	Goal
Patients remaining abstinent	97%	90%	92%	greater than 85%
Improvement in quality of relationships	100%	99%	97%	greater than 85%
Improvement in overall physical and mental health	92%	100%	93%	greater than 85%
Improvement in overall quality of life	100%	100%	98%	greater than 85%

- Withdrawal management, the safe and medically supervised elimination of addictive substances from the body, is the most intensive care offered for patients with addictive disease. Acute withdrawal symptoms are managed by the use of appropriate medications specific for each patient's situation. The length of stay for detoxification depends upon the drug of choice and the severity of the withdrawal.

	LMH 2021	LMH 2022	LMH 2023	Goal
Average length of stay – alcohol treatment	2.4 days	2.9 days	2.8 days	less than 3 days
Average length of stay – opiate treatment	N/A*	2.5 days	2.3 days	less than 4 days
Average length of stay – tranquilizer (benzodiazepines) treatment	1.0 days	4.0** days	3.0 days**	less than 5 days

\*In 2021, an accurate representation of the length of stay for opiate treatment could not be obtained due to fewer patients visiting Licking Memorial Behavioral Health.  
\*\*Shepherd Hill has implemented a new treatment protocol for benzodiazepine addiction that requires a longer stay at the facility.

- Education is considered an essential component of providing complete behavioral healthcare. A thorough understanding of the diagnosis, the purpose of medications, side effects to medications and the expected response to treatment leads to decreased relapse and readmission rates and increased long-term compliance with medication on an outpatient basis.

	LMH 2021	LMH 2022	LMH 2023	Goal
Medication education provided for patients and/or family	100%	100%	98%	greater than 97%

- In mental health, aftercare programs are recommended for patients who have completed intense treatment programs as well as hospitalization. At Shepherd Hill, follow-up appointments are required in order to continue monitoring patients for continued symptoms and medication effectiveness.

	LMH 2021	LMH 2022	LMH 2023	Goal
Aftercare appointment scheduled within 2 weeks of treatment	100%	99.6%	93%	100%

#### Data Footnotes:

(1) Comparative data from the Midas Comparative Database.

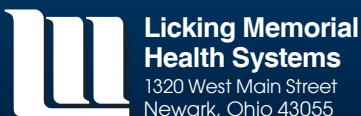
Check out our Quality Report Cards online at [LMHealth.org](http://LMHealth.org).



# Communicating with Your Teenager

A necessary developmental stage of adolescence occurs when children begin to test boundaries and may pull away from parents as they begin to assert their own independence. Navigating this transition is difficult for parents; however, it is important to stay connected to children during their teenage years. The following communication advice can assist parents to establish and maintain a healthy and trusting relationship with their children.

- **Listen** – teens are more likely to be open with adults if they do not feel pressured to share information. It is important to stay open and interested.
- **Show trust** – if teens feel that their parents have faith in them and can rely on them, it will boost their confidence and they will become more likely to complete the action.
- **Do not be a dictator** – setting rules creates boundaries, and explaining why these rules are in place will make the rule seem more reasonable.
- **Give praise** – although teenagers may not seem as if they care about what their parents think, they still value and want their parents' approval. Positive encouragement can help build the relationship.
- **Keep emotions under control** – adolescents are less able to control their emotions and think logically when they are upset. It is important for parents to remain calm before responding.
- **Model self-care** – parents who practice self-care teach their children how to establish boundaries, tune into themselves, and take action to remain healthy.
- **Take care of your mental health** – the mental health of children is connected to their parents' mental health. Parents who exhibit good mental health are better able to support their children's mental health.
- **Validate their feelings** – parents often want to solve their children's problems or downplay disappointments, which can feel dismissive. Show understanding and empathy by reflecting their feelings back to them.
- **Do things together** – engaging in activities that interest both parent and child can strengthen the relationship and create positive experiences. It is important for teens to know that they can be around their parents and have fun without talking about anything personal.
- **Share regular meals** – sharing a meal together gives each family member an opportunity to casually talk with one another. Children who feel comfortable talking to their parents about everyday topics are more inclined to confide in their parents about difficult things.
- **Be observant** – variations in behavior and eating habits are normal for teens, but changes such as isolating themselves and avoiding activities they once enjoyed, could be an indication of something more serious. They may need to talk with a mental health professional.
- **Be present** – it is important for parents to give their full attention when engaging with their children. Putting down phones and closing computers remove distractions and sends the message that the child is the most important focus.



**Licking Memorial Health Systems**  
1320 West Main Street  
Newark, Ohio 43055

Visit us at [LMHealth.org](https://www.LMHealth.org).

Please take a few minutes to read this month's report on **Behavioral Health Care**. You will soon discover why Licking Memorial Health Systems is measurably different ... for your health!

The Quality Report Card is a publication of the LMHS Public Relations Department. Please contact the Public Relations Department at (220) 564-1572 to receive future mailings.

The articles contained in this publication should not be considered specific medical advice as each individual circumstance is different. Should you need medical advice, consult your physician. Entire publication copyrighted 2024 Licking Memorial Health Systems. All rights reserved.