11 Questions to Ask…

Before Psychiatric Hospitalization of Your Child or Adolescent

Daycare.com would like to thank American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for this information in striving to make daycare and childcare a more productive and efficient service. You can contact them at: 3615 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016 voice: 202-966-7300 fax: 202-966-2891.

http://www.daycare.com/fastfacts/psychhosp.html

Hospitalization in a psychiatric facility is one of a range of available treatment options when a child or adolescent is mentally ill. Parents are naturally concerned and may be frightened and confused when inpatient treatment is recommended for their child. By asking the following questions, parents will gain a better understanding of the proposed stay in an inpatient facility:

1. Why is psychiatric inpatient treatment being recommended for our child, and how will it help our child?
2. What are the other treatment alternatives to hospital treatment, and how do they compare?
3. Is a child and adolescent psychiatrist admitting our child to the hospital?
4. What does the inpatient treatment include, and how will our child be able to keep up with school work?
5. What are the responsibilities of the child and adolescent psychiatrist and other people on the treatment team?
6. How long will our child be in the hospital, how much will it cost, and how do we pay for these services?
7. What will happen if we can no longer afford to keep our child in this hospital or if the insurance company denies coverage and inpatient treatment is still necessary?
8. Will our child be on a unit specifically designed for the treatment pf children and adolescents and is this hospital accredited by the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) as a treatment facility for youngsters of our child’s age?
9. How will we as parents be involved in our child’s hospital treatment, including the decision for discharge and after-care treatment?
10. How will the decision be made to discharge our child from the hospital?
11. Once our child is discharged, what are the plans for continuing or follow-up treatment?
Hospital treatment is a serious matter for parents, children and adolescents. Parents should raise these questions before their child or adolescent is admitted to the hospital. Parents who are informed and included as part of their child’s hospital treatment are important contributors and partners in the treatment process.

If after asking the above questions, parents still have serious questions or doubts, they should feel free to ask for a second opinion.

When we found the questions on page one from Daycare.com on the Internet, we asked our Wisconsin Family Ties’ family advocates across the state to assess them based on their experience and the experience of the families with whom they work. Here are additional ideas from our advocates of Questions to Ask before Psychiatric Hospitalization of your Child or Adolescent:

- What is the policy on visits and phone calls?
- Are siblings allowed to visit?
- Is there a mandatory family therapy involved?
- Is there an aftercare program?
- Does the hospital psychiatrist consult with the child’s regular psychiatrist and/or therapist?
- Will parents be consulted regarding changes in medication, and if so, before the changes are made or after.
- What types of consequences are there for undesirable behavior, i.e. are restraints and seclusion used?

**Related materials available through Wisconsin Family Ties (please call or email us):**

“Family Friendliness of Children’s Mental Health Services in Psychiatric Hospitals” from summer 2001 WFT newsletter, *family ties.*

“Selecting a Residential Treatment Center for your Child” by Peg Nichols. Reprint from *Because Kids Grow Up,* NAMI Child & Adolescent Center, fall 2001.