

What to Expect When Taking a Child to the Emergency Room (ER)

Taking a child to the ER for mental health concerns can be a difficult experience for both you and your loved one. It can be an emotional event that results in feelings of fear and self-doubt, or even a sense of failure. Although these feelings are not uncommon, they are in no way an indication of failure or reason for blame. Bringing your child to the ER was the right thing to do. Emergency rooms are safe and filled with professionals ready to care for your child.

The process of receiving care in the ER for emotional/mental health issues can be different than receiving care for physical illness or injuries such as severe abdominal pain and broken bones. With physical illness or injuries, testing and lab work are often followed by a diagnosis and emergency treatment. Frequently, there is a quick fix in this circumstance, with some sense of relief and wellbeing. Please know that the process for emotional/mental health are often more time consuming.

Although lab work may be completed to determine if physical issues contribute to your child's difficulty, there are no specific tests to quickly diagnose the emotional/mental health problem your child may be experiencing. What can happen, however, is that you will receive the help you need to better understand your child's current mental health concern(s); you will receive guidance in managing the current crisis and in assuring your child's safety; and you will receive a referral for services meant to enhance your child's mental wellness post ER visit.

"A better future begins when we guide a child forward today"

The referral will likely be for outpatient services that best meet your child's/family's needs. While you may leave the ER without a diagnosis or medication, hopefully you will have a better under-