

APA Official Actions

Position Statement on Psychiatrist Input into the Design and Construction of Psychiatric Evaluation and Treatment Facilities

Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 2025

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“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – APA Operations Manual

Issue:

National accreditation regulators (e.g., CMS and The Joint Commission) and basic ethical tenets require maintenance of environmental safety for the protection of vulnerable patients, including those who suffer from major mental disorders. The inpatient, emergency department, and outpatient settings (whether freestanding or embedded in larger facilities) in which psychiatric evaluation, treatment, and care occur, can have a critical impact on the safety, effectiveness, and quality of the experiences of both persons receiving these services and those providing the services. The process of psychiatric facility design, construction/renovation, and layout, particularly regarding patients and their rooms visibility, is significantly different from non-psychiatric facility design. The monitoring of patient flow, including critical transitions of care such as handoffs to and from step up/down systems of care and the requisite transportation and prevention of elopements and injury of patient and staff during these handoffs, is an important area in need of expert input. Psychiatrists offer unique and crucial expertise regarding safe and quality evaluation, treatment, and care of persons with mental disorders, and they have been excluded from the process of facility planning.

It is the position of APA that:

When designing, constructing, or renovating a new psychiatric facility, national accreditation agencies should include a psychiatrist as part of the design team.