

Stepping Down or Leaping into the Abyss?

My name is Bobbi Morrow and I would like to address the issue of patient dumping from mental health hospitals. The lack of continuing care and meaningful, effective follow-up treatment plans for people with chronic serious mental illness is devastating for patients and costly for Colorado.

My daughter has serious overlapping mental illnesses, a history of suicide threats, and a substance abuse disorder. In September of 2016 she was hospitalized in Cedar Springs Psychiatric Hospital for two weeks. When she was released I was told that she would be "stepped down". In my naivete I thought that she would be going to a facility that would provide further treatment and supervised medications. I was told that her "step down" meant that she would either go to her previous address or she would be released to a homeless shelter so she ended up staying at a hotel in Colorado Springs for two months. Just recently, I learned from her that while at that hotel she attempted suicide by taking almost an entire bottle of one her anti-psychotic medications. She never went to the hospital for the overdose. However, in December of 2016 she was sent to Detox for meth use.

In February 2017 she was arrested for substance abuse (Meth). When she was released she exhibited dangerous behavior so the police took her to Platte Valley Medical Center in Brighton and placed her on a mental health hold. She was released after 36 hours. In May of 2017 she attempted suicide again by taking an overdose of pills. Again, she was not hospitalized.

In September 2017 during intake appointment at a mental health clinic she was placed on a mental health hold during a psychotic episode. She was sent to Peak View Mental Health Hospital for 72 hours. They released her and put her in a cab that dropped her off at a homeless shelter. She took a bus back to Denver.

She was placed on a mental health hold in October 2017 after threatening to kill herself and taken to Aurora South. They released her after 6 hours because she didn't have a plan to carry out her threats.

On December 15, 2017 Arapahoe House called the police and placed her on a mental health hold; she was taken to Porter Hospital and stayed for two weeks. Because Arapahoe house closed she couldn't return there. So, on December 28th 2017 Porter Hospital was going to release her to a homeless shelter downtown. She was wearing paper hospital scrubs, a coat, and socks. I picked her up and gave her some warm clothes. She ended up at a Walmart parking lot in Westminster.

From December 28th to January 29th she did not take her medications. On January 29th she decided to take her medications; several of them, all at once. In a suicide attempt. After spending two days at Swedish Hospital she was transferred to Aurora North Behavioral Health. Aurora North tried to transfer her to Bridge House but they would not take her so Aurora North released her on February 8th. She is currently trying to get into a treatment facility.

Her "treatment plans" have consisted of written instructions telling her to call for a follow-up appointment; continue with her outpatient treatment; use the list of resources given to her; and fill a fistful of prescriptions.