

1. Why is someone hospitalized in an acute psychiatric hospital?

Hillmont Psychiatric Center is an acute psychiatric hospital. To be admitted a person must be determined to have a psychological or mental impairment causing him/her to be a danger to self, a danger to others, or gravely disabled. Patients can present themselves to the hospital for assessment, or may be brought in by law enforcement officers or the Ventura County Crisis Team.

2. Involuntary Holds

When your loved one first comes to the hospital he or she will go through the Assessment and Referral Department. Your loved one will be assessed to see if he or she meets the guidelines for being an inpatient at the hospital. The guidelines are stringent, and the patient must be considered by the assessor to be “danger to self, danger to others, or gravely disabled.” If they meet these criteria they may be held against their will for *up to* 72 hours. (This is often referred to as a 5150 or involuntary hold.) The patient may also sign him/herself in, rather than being held against his/her will, however, the criteria are the same. Psychiatric Hospitals are for acute care, and people who do not meet these rigorous criteria will not be admitted.

If, during the first 72 hours, the doctor believes your loved one is no longer a “danger to self, danger to others, or gravely disabled” he or she will be released. If, after the 72 hour deadline your loved one continues to meet these criteria he or she will have a hearing with a judge in the hospital. The judge can order at that time that the hospital keep the patient against his or her will for up to 14 more days. (Called a 5250 hold.)

The purpose of the acute care psychiatric hospital is to stabilize a person. Your loved one could be hospitalized for days, or weeks, depending on the severity of the symptoms.

3. Information to give the hospital

The staff will need the most current information available about your loved one’s condition. This information will include:

- Current symptoms
- A summary of his/her medical history
- Previous hospitalizations
- Personal information (name, date of birth, address, diagnoses, medications and dosages)
- Contact information for your relative’s doctors and therapists

4. Privacy Laws

Doctors and hospitals are bound by strict privacy laws that restrict them from speaking to anyone besides the patient unless the patient has signed a Release of Information form. These laws do not prohibit family members from sharing information with the hospital and doctors. You can do this by handing written information in person to the doctor or hospital, or by faxing it.

5. Release of Information

In order for the doctors and other staff at the hospital to speak freely with you about your loved one’s care, your relative must sign a *Release of Information* form. The hospital has these forms, and should present the patient with the option to sign upon admission. If he/she refused to sign you can request that hospital staff ask your family member again on another day if they would like to sign the form.

Doctors, nurses, social workers and other hospital staff may also share information when the patient is in the same room with the family members if the patient verbally agrees to information being shared.

Encourage your loved one to sign a release before discharge from the hospital so that you can help them as much as possible once they leave the hospital.

Your involvement in their post-hospital care can significantly aid them in their recovery.

6. Visiting your relative at the hospital

a. Visiting hours at Hillmont Psychiatric Center are:

Monday-Friday	5:30 pm – 7:20 pm
Saturday and Sunday	12:30 pm – 2:20 pm
Holidays	12:30 pm – 2:20 pm

b. What can you bring in to your relative?

The staff will check everything you bring in to the hospital for your loved one. Clothing is ok, as long as it does not have strings. Hoodies and sweatpants with strings will not be allowed. Shoelaces will be removed. A pair of slip-on shoes that do not require laces may be more comfortable for your loved one.

You can bring in dinner for your loved one to eat during your visit, but you may not bring any caffeinated beverages.

You may NOT bring in your cell phone, purse, camera, or any item the hospital considers contraband.

c. How many visitors may see your relative at one time?

Visitors are restricted to two at a time in the unit. If more than two come, you can take turns while others wait in the lobby area.

d. Visitors under age 18

Please contact the Charge Nurse 24 hours in advance so staffing can be coordinated to assist.

7. Hospital Staff

a. Doctor—Specializes in psychiatry and is in charge of the patient’s care during their stay. Often the doctor has rotating shifts, or works at other facilities as well. The doctor will see your loved one sometime during the day, but may not be at the facility full time.

b. Registered Nurse—RN ensures patient’s physical safety, administers medications and monitors the overall health of the patient.

c. Social Worker—Identifies social service and therapeutic needs, and helps connect the patient with community resources. Works directly with the patient, their family, and community providers to explain treatment options and plans and coordinates discharge plans.

d. Psych Techs, LVNs and many other employees will also be involved in your loved one's care.

8. Who do I contact when I have concerns?

If you have concerns about your loved one's care or other aspects of the hospitalization, bring them first to the hospital's direct care staff. If that person is not available, or the issue is not resolved, then speak with the head nurse or manager of the psychiatric unit. You can also contact the Social Worker at the hospital with concerns.

Hillmont Psychiatric Center
200 N. Hillmont Ave, Ventura, CA 93003
Tel: (805) 652-6729
Fax: (805) 652-5730

If the problem is not resolved, you may want to contact the patient advocate. The Patient's Rights Advocate is not located at the hospital, and helps patients in many locations.

Call 805-477-5731 or email tina.coates@ventura.org to speak to the Patient's Rights Advocate.

9. Discharge Planning

Hillmont Psychiatric Center is an acute care facility. This is for crisis care and is the highest level of psychiatric care available. Recovery, though, is a long process that will require ongoing care, treatment and support. When the crisis has stabilized the staff will determine the appropriate level of care and will begin coordinating discharge and placement. This is largely the responsibility of the Social Work staff, and ideally will include input from your loved one and you. Patients are discharged to a number of living arrangements which include independent or supportive housing, a local shelter, a Room & Board or a Board & Care. If your loved one has been living with you and you no longer feel that is appropriate you should indicate that clearly to the Social Worker.

NAMI Ventura County Information

NAMI Ventura County has a number of programs that may help you through this challenging time in your family. There is no cost to any of these programs, and you can learn more about them at namiventura.org.

Friends in the Lobby

While your loved one is in the hospital you may meet the NAMI *Friends in the Lobby* volunteers. They are in the lobby during visiting hours 3 days each week. You can get information and support from them.

Family Support Groups

There are a number of support groups for family members of a person with a mental illness throughout the county. NAMI *Family Support Groups* are an excellent place to find support and information from people who have been there. Check our website, namiventura.org, to find the dates, times and locations.

Family-to-Family Education

After the crisis is over you may consider signing up for NAMI's *Family-to-Family* class. In the 12 week *Family-to-Family* class you will learn skills to solve problems, communicate effectively with your loved one, and manage crises. You will also find mutual support from people who relate to your experiences.

Helpline

The NAMI Ventura County Helpline, **805-500-NAMI** (6264), is staffed by trained volunteers. They are standing by from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, to give you information, resources and support.

NAMI Ventura County has many more programs. Please check our website, namiventura.org to learn more.

NAMI Ventura County
(805) 500-6264
info@namiventura.org
www.namiventura.org



Ventura County

National Alliance on Mental Illness

A Family Guide to Acute Psychiatric Care

NAMI Ventura County
805-500-6264
info@namiventura.org
www.namiventura.org