

# Behavioral Health Assessment Officer: Job Description

## General description

The Behavioral Health Assessment Officer (BHAO) will be the primary evaluator of patients in need of behavioral health assessment in the emergency department (ED) based on screening results or on presenting behavioral health concerns identified by the nursing staff at triage. The BHAO may also assist staff on the acute inpatient units with patients identified by the hospital as having a possible need for psychiatric admission. The BHAO will participate in providing psychiatric evaluations, triage and brief crisis interventions including suicide risk assessment, substance use disorder assessment and safe disposition related to behavioral health needs. The BHAO is also responsible for coordinating with hospital and community providers to ensure adequate communication and facilitation of patient care including appropriate mental health, and substance use as appropriate. Administering rating scales and collecting patient reported outcomes measures for patients in the hospital ED or inpatient units when clinically appropriate is another expectation of the BHAO's role. The BHAO is expected to discuss cases by phone with the psychiatric consultant whenever there is a perceived need for a psychiatric transfer, admission or referral, as well as when the BHAO or medical provider has any questions or concerns about a patient or a situation.

## Responsibilities

Participates in psychiatric evaluation, assessment, and triage for patients seen in the emergency department and inpatient units to facilitate identification of patients who are in need of an inpatient psychiatric admission.

Consults with the psychiatrist by telephone for all presentations as it relates to the assessment and disposition planning of patients. BHAO will discuss this with the patient, obtain a signed tele-med consent and schedule the face-to-face consult using a hospital telepsychiatry workflow, as appropriate.

Provides clinical, collateral and psychosocial information to provider for patients seen in the hospital, to be used in disposition determination by provider.

Provides follow-up to patients and their significant support systems to promote continuity of care in situations where additional contact is needed to complete ED interventions such as crisis intervention, safety planning, or to facilitate referrals for ongoing treatment and safe discharge.

Provides an approach with patients and families that is culturally competent. Interacts effectively with individuals of different cultures including socioeconomic status and more specifically related to the demographics of their local community.

Develops and maintains collaborative relationships with a variety of community and hospital resources in the region who are involved in the care of patients or who refer patients to the Hospital.

Identifies specific individual and systemic barriers to discharge and develops a plan for addressing each barrier to effect a safe discharge in the timeliest manner possible.

Facilitates involvement of agencies providing care to the patient and family/support networks, in working collaboratively for discharge of the patient to the community.

Notifies and involves supervisor and/or department administration as appropriate in order to effect a timely, safe discharge for patient.

Initiates referrals to departmental clinics and/or community agencies for services as needed to facilitate discharge.

Ensures that proper treatment and referral protocols are followed with respect to child abuse, domestic violence, consultation with specialty clinics, and referrals.

Documents intervention in patient's chart in compliance with division, department and hospital policy.

Provides psychoeducation to patients and their families, in addition to providing naloxone training to patients and families when indicated.

Participates in regular supervisory sessions with assigned supervisor.

## Position qualifications

Masters or doctoral degree in social work, mental health counseling, psychology or other related human services field that provides licensure or certification consistent with state guidelines.

Capacity to manage stressful situations, problem solve quickly and react appropriately during psychiatric emergencies.

Preferred candidates have at least 2 years of mental health clinical experience and/or experience doing crisis stabilization; substance use clinical experience preferred.

Therapy and counseling: knowledge of principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental health and substance use disorders.

Ability to collaborate with professionals who comprise the treatment team and work together to achieve goals set.

Demonstrate competency in providing cognitive and behavioral interventions within an emergency department or inpatient setting.

*This HRSA RCORP RCOE program is supported by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) of the US Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$12.3M with 0% financed with non-governmental sources.*

*The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by HRSA, HHS or the US Government.*