

Hello,  
My name is Carolyn White, a resident of Cambridge for 6 years, a  
member of NAMI Camb Middlesex & a NAMI Family to Family teacher.  
As a teacher, we hear many stories about the CHA. They have all been positive.  
I have collected 4 stories.  
From a NAMI Cambridge Middlesex member and resident of Cambridge: (RO)

25  
May 5  
2014

A mother  
~~"I can't come tonight, but if there are follow-up meetings I would like to be involved.~~  
The psych ER was a lifeline for [my son] at a crucial point in his journey to recovery.  
Even when [my son] was most symptomatic he trusted the ER and saw it as a safe place  
where he'd be treated with respect and understanding. On at least one occasion he went  
by himself because he wanted someone to talk to. I asked him about the value of the ER,  
and he said "It's important to have a place where you can talk about your symptoms.  
They treated me nicely."

Not every visit was voluntary, of course. But even when he was taken there against his  
will, he always left feeling he'd been taken care of. Knowing it was there gave him the  
confidence to forge ahead.

Hope this helps.  
Thanks,

From a NAMI Cambridge Middlesex member and resident of Cambridge: (RS)

A mother  
I wish I could join you, but I have a medical appointment then that I can't change. Please  
feel very free to mention, without using my name, that you have a colleague who feels  
that her son's life was probably saved by the care he got in the CHA ER and psychiatric  
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*From a NAMI Cambridge Middlesex member: a father is recounting this; the family lives in  
California; this description occurred after suicide attempt the preceding month.  
It was on a Sunday morning. Jack's siblings were here to visit their distressed brother. With  
Jack, we all decided to go to the Prudential tower to see the view. Jack was at his wits' end. So I  
told the taxi to take us to the hospital (emergency psychiatric unit) instead of the tower (His  
siblings, visibly upset by their brother's behavior, went on to the Prudential). Jack was  
already in their records, which made things simpler when we arrived. We had to wait a while  
(it was on a Sunday), but not that long (about 1 and half hour). Jack kept jumping up and  
down saying "I want to jump out of my body, I want to jump out of my body". I was totally  
powerless, could not talk to him as he did not seem to hear me. When he did, he was acting  
extremely hostile, saying terrible and very hurtful things. Once in a while, he would lie down  
on the floor for several minutes, mumbling words which did not make sense. We were the  
only people there. The psychiatrist finally came, took care of him, kept him for a few hours,  
told me he would be ok, released him to his older brother, who came back to the hospital and  
took him home as I had a plane to catch to go back to California (my wife was on her way to  
Boston that same night).*

*Imagine that scene in a regular ER at the hospital, with all kinds of people around with their various sprained ankles, broken legs, asthma attacks or whatever. The added stress for everybody, doctors, patients, relatives, watching poor Jack acting the way he was. The embarrassment for Jack himself, when he would realize how he would had behaved in front of that "public" (he actually called me that night -while I was waiting at the airport- to apologize to me).*

*Another*

From a NAMI Cambridge Middlesex member and ~~resident of Cambridge~~. (RS)  
She writes: I am glad to have this opportunity to express my thanks to both the Cambridge Police dept and the ER of the CHA.

My experience, or rather my son's and my experience with the ER was when my son left me a note one morning to say he had to do what he had to do. Canyo imagine the fear that struck my heart?! Was he going to jump off a building? He had left his keys, his phone, his wallet, his ID. I didn't know what to think. I contacted the police to ask them what I should do. They said it is better to report a missing person sooner rather than later and to come down to the station. They suggested contacting his psychiatrist to get a Section 12 Pink Slip. I think they actually made the phone call for me and I spoke to the doctor. 5 harrowing hours when you don't know what to do. I decided to print out a photo of him at Walgreen's to help the police. While I was there, the phone rang as our building's doorbell system operates with one's cell phone. It was my son. He was cold andhungry and decided to come back. I rushed home thrilled. I called the police jubilantly. 20 minutes later they were at my door. I was mortified. They had to take him to the hospital as they had a Pink Slip. I apologized to my son but he went quietly with them. So did I. The ER of the psychiatric unit talked with him at length. Since they already knew him, they determined that he could go home with me if he promised to return to the Partial Program the next 2 weeks. They could not have been more kind and understanding and respectful toward my son. He cmplied and it was a useful program that bought us a little more time to figure out what to do. The social worker involved with that program was quite experienced and we learned the phrase, Fake it until you make it. She had a lot of faith that my son could make it.

I can't say enough good things about the ER of the Cambridge Hospital.

What we want:

- That the psychiatric unit remain as one with the ER. <sup>Psychiatric</sup> It is a well-oiled system, we would wonder if the regular ER staff ~~it~~ would be ashamed to dis-  
mantle it.
- that the CHA get properly reimbursed for its services by the insurance companies and by Mass Health
- that everyone recognize the importance of a city like Cambridge to have an excellent hospital and psychiatric unit. It is too important, this Safety Net hospital. to Cambridge residents +
- <sup>thank +</sup> Councillor Denise Simmons  
To commend the Cambridge City Council for taking up this issue and pursuing it with our State legislators in an effort to help the hospital with its finances.

The journey of mental illness did not come with a road map but having the <sup>Psychiatric ER of the</sup> CHA as the first stop on that journey has made a huge difference in the long run for so many of us.

We sincerely appreciate being able to speak out about it this evening + the resolution by Councillor Denise Simmons.

Thank you