

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1515 N. Flagler Drive, Suite 101
West Palm Beach, FL 33401-3431

Health Care District, Palm Beach County, and HCA Florida JFK North Hospital's Model Addiction Stabilization Unit and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Approach

August 16, 2022

In a bold move to combat the opioid crisis through evidence-based medical treatment, the Health Care District of Palm Beach County, HCA Florida JFK North Hospital, and the Palm Beach County Commission unveiled an innovative public-private partnership in February 2020. The one-of-a-kind Addiction Stabilization Unit (ASU) within HCA Florida JFK North Hospital's Emergency Room in West Palm Beach is in close proximity to the Health Care District's outpatient clinic on the same campus. This collaboration provides a unique ecosystem where patients can receive treatment for their Substance Use Disorder (SUD) in the ER for the most acute stage of their illness, as well as a continuum of care right after discharge for as long as it's needed. Since SUD is a lifelong illness, this approach affords patients access to quality care on an ongoing basis.

Since opening, the ASU has served more than 1,500 unique patients who have received evidence-based treatment provided by physicians, psychiatrists, addiction-specialized therapists, nurses and other health care providers. Recovery coaches are an important part of the team in this model of care as they meet patients while they are in the ASU ER and help them with a warm handoff to connect to the next level of care. This warm handoff to readily-available outpatient treatment eliminates the usual barriers to care including a lack of transportation, lack of insurance, inability to pay for clinic visits or medication, lack of education about addiction treatment, and an overall lack of compassion that is common for this relapsing illness. A patient can enter the program through either the ASU ER or through the Health Care District's outpatient clinic as a walk in, no appointment needed.

What sets this program apart is that it provides the **two** most important principals needed for optimum outcomes: **First**, readily available access to evidence-based treatment for SUD in the ER setting on a 24/7 basis (when the patient is most motivated to engage). This is modeled after any other life-threatening illness that requires specialized treatment in the ER, similar to trauma or stroke centers. **Second**, the patient receives a *warm handoff* to a higher level of care or to an outpatient setting for a continuum of patient care. The outpatient clinic is where the real work begins through an investment in the patient's ongoing treatment consisting of psychiatric services in concert with SUD treatment, pharmacy services, primary and dental care, transportation, housing, compassionate care through all phases of care delivery, and an understanding that this is a lifelong-relapsing illness that requires establishing long-term access to care in a patient-centered medical home setting.

In this Palm Beach County model, fire rescue agencies in municipalities throughout the county have adopted protocols allowing them to bypass the closest emergency room to transport overdose patients directly to this centrally-located ASU. For patients arriving after an overdose, medication assisted treatment (Buprenorphine) is provided within the first few hours of arrival to take away the cravings, minimize withdrawal symptoms, and increase the probability the patient will comply with a longer-term treatment plan and accept a warm handoff. The six-bed ASU is staffed with a team of experts that include Emergency Room physicians, nurses, addiction-trained medical personnel, and licensed social workers and a recovery coach. Patients receive immediate care and access to treatment to reduce the chance of relapse. The Health Care District provides the funding for indigent care in the ASU ER which earned the support of this private hospital system.

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Fast forward to August 2022 and the state of Florida announced its new model of addiction care that replicates the Health Care District's evidence-based approach of treating substance use disorder as a medical condition. The Health Care District provided a proof of concept through its outcomes data which compelled the state to adopt this approach in other Florida counties with the state's new [CORE \(Coordinated Opioid Recovery\) network](#).

The Health Care District's SUD clinic is located at 2051 45th Street, Suite 300 in West Palm Beach and is part of the network of C. L. Brumback Primary Care Clinics throughout the county. These Federally Qualified Health Centers serve all patients, regardless of their ability to pay, and offer a sliding fee scale. To make an appointment, patients can call 561-642-1000 or visit www.brumbbackclinics.org