

12 steps to discharging mental health patients

1. Educate the patient and family regarding the importance of ongoing care and follow-up appointments.
2. Have set appointments for medication management and psychotherapy in place at discharge.
3. Include the family in the planning whenever possible.
4. Communicate with the primary care physician regarding the treatment plan and medication regime.
5. Ensure that patients sign the release of information for coordination of care and communication between the team of treating professionals.
6. Obtain requisition records and a thorough history for review by treating professionals.
7. Develop safety plans for the patient, including education regarding acute symptoms that require action.
8. Recommend home intervention support if available, especially for patients who have been previously noncompliant.
9. Consider maintaining the same treatment team whenever possible across levels of care or for repeated hospitalizations.
10. Identify the case manager as the repository for data, coordination between the team and ongoing treatment planning.
11. Utilize all available support systems, including family, community, and health care.
12. Create an outpatient treatment plan that includes as patient appropriate: identification of triggers, warning symptoms, anniversary reactions, support of medication management and psychotherapy, identification and reduction of violence, improving coping, relaxation exercises, expanding social support, healthy choices, and positive expressions of anger/anger management and empowerment of the patient. ■