

WellSpan Good Samaritan Hospital

2026 HAP Achievement Award Community Champions Award—Small/Medium Division

A New Model for Behavioral Health Crisis Response

The Goal

Behavioral health crisis care was creating significant pressure on the emergency department and hospital operations, driving long stays, extended boarding, and avoidable involuntary commitments. The team recognized that many individuals could be stabilized earlier through community-based crisis services, creating an opportunity to shift care upstream, strengthen community partnerships, and preserve emergency resources for patients who needed hospital-level care.

The Intervention

Beginning in 2022, the organization redesigned behavioral health crisis care to move support upstream and reduce reliance on the emergency department. Community-based Walk-In Center and Mobile Crisis programs were expanded to provide rapid evaluation, stabilization, and referral in non-hospital settings, with the walk-in model designed to feel more therapeutic for individuals with low- to moderate-acuity needs.



For patients requiring emergency services, emergency department care was strengthened through embedded therapy and psychiatry consultations, daily multidisciplinary huddles, and real-time review of disposition barriers and bed availability. Partnerships with EMS, law enforcement, schools, and community agencies helped identify crises earlier and connect



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individuals to the right care before escalation, while improved discharge processes reinforced the need for coordinated hospital and community solutions.

Results

The redesign improved behavioral health crisis care and hospital throughput. Extended emergency department boarding for behavioral health patients dropped dramatically, average length of stay was cut by more than half, and diversion was eliminated for more than 18 months. More than 1,200 individuals were also served through Walk-In Center and Mobile Crisis programs, showing that more patients received support earlier through community-based care.