



EmPath Unit : Patient Area



The Case for Connecticut's First EmPATH Unit at Griffin Hospital

A New Model in Behavioral Healthcare
A Request for Your Consideration



WITH YOU, WE CAN OPEN DOORS TO HEAL THOSE IN CRISIS

Griffin Health has embarked on an innovative initiative to address the challenges faced by individuals experiencing severe psychiatric conditions and emotional crisis. Your belief in breakthrough, patient-centered healthcare can help Griffin build Connecticut's first Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment and Healing (EmPATH) Unit.

Behavioral health crisis conditions are a significant – and growing – concern in the state and throughout the country. Nationwide, 1 in every 8 Emergency Department (ED) visits involve a behavioral health issue or substance use disorder. At Griffin Hospital, approximately 1 in every 7 patients come to its ED for help with a psychiatric crisis. Griffin seeks to compassionately address the specialized needs of these individuals by building an EmPATH Unit.



EmPath Unit : Family Room

People come to the ED in their most desperate moments, including states of extreme emotional crisis. This creates patient care issues as ED teams are only equipped to evaluate and stabilize patients requiring crisis care and don't include the behavioral health professionals and support staff required to initiate therapeutic care. As a result, behavioral health crisis patients often spend hours - and even days - in a busy and stressful ED environment that is not conducive to effective psychiatric treatment and can be counter-productive to those in a sensitive emotional state.

Griffin Hospital, recognized by Newsweek as one of the world's best hospitals for six consecutive years and a Planetree Gold Certified Patient-Centered facility for 15 years, is poised to transform this reality. Griffin is building an innovative EmPATH Unit that will provide compassionate care to people faced with a behavioral health crisis. It is a proven model that reimagines emergency psychiatric care from the ground up.



This specialized area creates a soothing space that helps patients stabilize, with the fewest possible constraints on their freedom. Here, decisions about patient dispositions are made after comprehensive psychiatric evaluation, treatment, and a recovery period in the unit's calm setting.

The EmPATH Unit will emphasize a wellness and recovery-oriented approach. The goal is to minimize anxiety and frustration while providing timely care that prevents unnecessary inpatient admissions. This approach benefits both the patient (by addressing their needs sooner) and the hospital (by allowing for more efficient use of resources).

URGENT CARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS OUR COMMUNITY'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic created an exponential demand for behavioral health services, including support for patients in severe emotional crisis. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 41% of adults in Connecticut have experienced symptoms of anxiety or depression, while more than 100,000 adults are living with serious mental illness.

With a shortage of behavioral health services statewide, individuals in emotional crisis are often brought to an ED by crisis centers, law enforcement, and well-meaning family members. However, EDs are limited in their ability to provide the therapeutic care required, leaving behavioral health patients waiting for the specialized support they urgently need. Over the past three years, psychiatric crisis cases at Griffin's ED surged by 50%. This influx strains our ED capacity, affecting care efficiency for all ED patients.



“Crisis patients will reach out and they want help, but they are directed to someone who tells them there is a six-month wait. This forces people to become even more discouraged and depressed or they come to the Emergency Department. And it burdens the ER systems because you have not only mental and behavioral health, but you have medical patients seeking care. And they are all coming to one spot that has limited resources for everyone.”

*Lindsay Slaybaugh MSN, RN NE-BC
Emergency Department Director*



GRIFFIN'S RESPONSE WITH A NEW MODEL IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE

A better model of care is needed for individuals in crisis seeking immediate help. A small number of pioneering EmPATH Units have been established across the United States in recent years. The model was conceived by Scott Zeller, M.D., while he served as the Medical Director of a Psychiatric Emergency in Alameda County, California. Dr. Zeller was frustrated that emergency psychiatric patients coming to EDs were being admitted as inpatients by default. It had been demonstrated that the great majority of psychiatric emergencies could be resolved in less than 24 hours with prompt, appropriate intervention, leading Dr. Zeller to develop a new model for treating crisis patients in emergency settings. This novel approach has the potential to transform behavioral health care by reducing involuntary hospitalizations and improving patient outcomes.



“We all know someone around us who’s struggling with addiction, with mental health issues. We have to think of what kind of place do we want them to come to? Do we want them to come to an emergency department that’s chaotic, or do we want them to come to an environment that’s just calmer and that’s just more geared towards mental health patients and helping them recover and heal.”

Evelisse, sister to Griffin Hospital Emergency Department patient

A SPACE FOR IMMEDIATE, COMPASSIONATE CARE

An EmPATH Unit represents a new, patient-centered approach in behavioral health care. EmPATH units provide a calming, therapeutic space for patients in emotional crisis. Staffed with psychiatrists, social workers, and trained nurses, these units prioritize rapid assessment and personalized care, aiming to stabilize patients within 24 hours and reduce the need for hospitalization.

Griffin Health’s planned EmPATH Unit will offer a serene space where a team of specialists work together to provide immediate care for a range of behavioral health needs. Across the U.S., EmPATH units are transforming lives and reducing the burden on EDs with a remarkable 25% reduction in crisis patient readmissions within 30 days, and stabilization of 75% of patients within 24 hours.



WHAT MAKES THE EMPATH APPROACH DIFFERENT?

EmPATH Units are not alternative destinations for behavioral health crisis patients. They are THE destination for exceptional care with:

- A “no exclusion” care philosophy designed and staffed to treat all emergency psychiatric patients
- Immediate patient evaluation and treatment by a psychiatrist with constant observation and re-evaluation
- A calming, healing, and comfortable setting completely distinct from the ED environment
- A focus on a wellness and recovery-oriented approach



EmPath Unit : Quiet Room

The EmPATH Unit will expand services for community members in psychiatric crisis with a compassionate, dignified and patient-focused approach in a specially designed and reserved environment. This approach exclusively focuses on improving and expediting positive outcomes.

Griffin Hospital will be the first provider in Connecticut to significantly enhance and expand its behavioral health care through a new EmPATH Unit that promises enhancements in patient outcomes, safety, and satisfaction. These units have also substantially reduced the need for coercive measures, instances of agitation and physical restraints, and unnecessary psychiatric hospitalizations, all while being more cost-effective than the traditional ED care approach. The fiscal benefits of EmPATH units include reduced boarding costs and unnecessary hospitalizations, while also freeing up ED beds for other medical emergencies.



“The empath unit is important because the hospital’s already offering a lot to the community. It’s got good programs, and this is going to be something that would bring things to another level. The optimal environment for someone with mental health crisis would include having people that can deal with your issues right away, have a comfortable place to be, that’s not like you’re on display. Maybe you need a quiet area. Have people that are more tuned into the needs of somebody who is having a mental health crisis.”

Richard, Griffin Hospital Emergency Department patient



THE TIME IS NOW

Your important investment will help transform the way our health system cares for individuals in emotional crisis. By supporting Griffin's EmPATH Unit, you can help create a compassionate solution to Connecticut's critical behavioral health needs, providing immediate, effective care that honors dignity and recovery.



To learn more and discuss ways you can contribute, please contact Griffin Health Development Fund Executive Director Kristy Jelenik at kjelenik@griffinhealth.org or 203-732-7539.



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EMPATH UNIT NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

Your generous investment in Griffin Hospital's EmPATH Unit will be celebrated, acknowledged and memorialized through an exclusive naming opportunity. Levels of investment and recognition include the following:

EmPATH Unit - \$1,000,000 (committed)

Left Wing - \$250,000

Right Wing - \$250,000

Nurse's Station - \$100,000

Conference Room - \$50,000

Staff Respite Rooms (2) - \$25,000

Consult Room - \$25,000

Quiet Rooms (3) - \$15,000

Patient Rooms (2) - \$10,000

Family Room - \$10,000



YOUR CHARITABLE GIVING OPTIONS

In addition to providing for the needs of our neighbors and Griffin Hospital, you can also enjoy benefits from the charitable income tax deductions that you may be entitled to as a result of your generosity. The following information provides an explanation of the various ways you can plan significant gifts to support the EmPATH Unit while taking full advantage of the income and estate tax benefits allowed under the law.

OUTRIGHT GIFTS: Most donors who pledge support to Griffin Hospital will fulfill their commitments with annual pledge payments of cash or marketable securities. For gifts of cash or stock, donors are entitled to a charitable income tax deduction equal to the fair market value of the contribution paid within the tax year, provided they itemize deductions on their tax returns.

SECURITIES: Gifts of appreciated securities such as stocks, bonds, or mutual funds offer distinct tax advantages. Donors who give appreciated securities to Griffin Hospital can avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciation and may claim a charitable income tax deduction of up to 30% of their annual adjusted gross income, with any excess deductions carried over for up to five years.

DONOR ADVISED FUNDS: If you have a donor advised fund with a commercial bank, investment firm or community foundation, you can recommend a grant award to the Griffin Hospital Development Fund using our tax ID of 06-0647014.

IRA GIFTS: If you are 70½ years or older, you can make a tax-free donation directly from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). This type of gift counts toward your required minimum distribution (RMD) and is not subject to federal income tax. This option offers a tax-efficient way to contribute while fulfilling your RMD requirements.

We welcome the opportunity to create a pledge payment schedule with any of the above charitable giving options to best meet your needs and help you fulfill your gift intentions.



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