

**Santa Cruz County  
Emergency Numbers  
& Resources**

**Santa Cruz County 24/7 Access Line  
800-952-2335**

**911** (dangerous behavior, weapons, emergencies)

**Child's Therapist #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Psychiatrist's #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Insurance Company #** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Policy** \_\_\_\_\_ **Group** \_\_\_\_\_

**Helpful websites:** [youth.namiscc.org](http://youth.namiscc.org);  
[scstudentresources.org](http://scstudentresources.org)

**Community programs/resources: Call 211**

**Patient Right's Advocate: 831-429-1913**

**Suicide Prevention: 831-458-5300**

Santa Cruz County Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services  
1400 Emeline Ave., Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
800-952-2335

Adapted with permission from  United Parents.org

# A Parent's Guide To Psychiatric Hospitalizations Of Minors

Questions & Answers





If you are reading this brochure, your child may have been taken to a psychiatric hospital on a “72 Hour Evaluation Hold”.

It can be very confusing and frightening for you, your family, and child. Your child may be troubled and needs help. You may need support to be clear about your child’s emotional wellbeing. Hopefully, this booklet gives you some information to help you understand a very complex situation.

Each county and hospital has their own protocols. All must comply with federal, state and county regulations. This brochure is meant to answer some of the most common questions asked by parents.

This is not intended as a legal document or the definitive medical definition of all procedures and protocols. We hope this booklet proves helpful to you during a very trying time. For continued support, strategies and ideas about supporting your child’s wellbeing, feel free to contact agencies on back cover.

## Coming Home . . .

**What should I do to prepare for my child to come home?** It is important for you to have a **safety** plan in place when your child comes home. Whatever triggered your child’s problem behavior may occur again. The hospital and your therapist will help you with this.

- Make sure you have been in touch with your child’s therapist/primary care physician/psychiatrist to advise them of the hospitalization, the circumstances leading to the hospitalization, a plan of action for you and your family, and an *immediate* appointment once your child is home. It is important that all family members are a part of this plan.
- Verify or set up an appointment *prior to discharge* with your child’s psychiatrist to review medication and treatment.
- Advise your child’s school counselor, if they have one, of the safety plan and insure it is in place at the school for your child’s re-entry to school.
- Give your child some time to adjust to being home. Plan some low-key evenings your child might enjoy. Let them tell you of their experience. Was it helpful? Did anything help them? This is a great time to learn what works, how the hospital assisted your child, if they attended school (*get credits for hours*), how staff interacted with your child. This is important to know if future hospitalizations occur.
- Medi-Cal members in Santa Cruz County can call Access Line at 800-952-2335 for follow up. They may have already contacted you. They will help you with a safety plan for your home and follow up with you for ongoing treatment as needed. They will provide you with local resources that will also help support you. If you have private insurance, contact the member service line for assistance.
- Discuss with everyone whether there are additional services that might help your child (anger management classes, social skills, increasing frequency of therapy, Parent Support Groups etc.) Take advantage of this help. See list on back cover.

If at any time you have serious concerns that your child is unstable, you can call 911 or County Access at 800-952-2335 can provide someone to assist you. If drugs are involved, take him/her to a local hospital emergency room first. Once your child is “medically cleared” a 72 Hour Evaluation Hold may be written for a clinical evaluation by the Child Crisis Response Team to determine appropriateness of involuntary psychiatric hospital admission (provided they are safe to transport).

## How will my child be discharged from the hospital?

*(Continued)*

Your child's personal belongings will be returned to you along with any prescriptions you will need to fill.

This prescription is only for a temporary supply. It may be changed or renewed during the scheduled follow up visit with your child's personal primary care physician or psychiatrist.



## What are the costs of a 72 Hour Evaluation Hold?

If a minor is a foster child or ward of the court, Medi-Cal will be charged. The expense of their treatment will be covered by whatever insurance the parent or Guardian has that covers the youth. If you have private insurance, call your company to ask. There will also be a cost if an ambulance is used to transport your child. Be sure to give all of your insurance information to the Crisis Stabilization Unit and the hospital. Crisis services are usually covered by insurance.

**Legal Ramifications?** If a minor is involuntarily hospitalized, there are legal issues that can follow them such as being denied gun permits. Check the law to understand how a 5150 may impact your child.

In Santa Cruz County, the Child Crisis Response Team is involved in the mental health crisis management of minors. The Child Crisis Response Team is located at the Crisis Stabilization Unit, 2250 Soquel Ave., Santa Cruz, CA. A multidisciplinary professional staff will conduct a clinical evaluation and may coordinate a safety plan to help avoid hospitalization and future problems. However, if your child requires admission for psychiatric hospitalization, access to that level of care will be provided. There are no psychiatric inpatient beds in Santa Cruz County. Minors seen by the Child Crisis Response Team are on a 72 Hour Evaluation Hold under Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC) section 5585 and a clinical evaluation is provided to better assess the care and treatment needed.

## What is a 72 Hour Clinical Evaluation?

WIC Section 5585 refers to a legally sanctioned 72-hour psychiatric evaluation hold placed by authorized persons to assess and obtain involuntary treatment for a minor who is suspected to be a "danger to him/herself", "danger to others", or "gravely disabled".

## Who Can Place Your Child On A 72 Hour Evaluation?

Persons authorized to place minors on a 72 Hour Evaluation Hold are sheriff/police officers, a designated member of the attending psychiatric facility staff, emergency physician or other person as designated by the County Board of Supervisors.

### When help arrives. . .

- Calmly advise all emergency staff of what is happening.
- Tell emergency staff or police of any prescriptions, drugs, etc. your child may be prescribed or have taken illegally.
- Follow the lead of the emergency staff.
- Take business cards, or write down all contact numbers.
- If your child is going to be taken to a hospital, you may want to include an extra pair of jeans, t-shirt, or socks in a shopping bag. Mark their name on labels. Do not include valuables, breakables or electronic devices.
- If your child has piercings, they are best left at home with any jewelry or valuables.

### Who Can Release a Minor From A 72 Hour Evaluation?

Once admitted to the hospital, only a licensed psychiatrist may release a psychiatric hold after doing a specified evaluation and assessment of your child.

### What Does This Mean?

It means that even if you disagree with the “hold”, you have no legal right to remove the child from the hold.

### What Happens Next?

If, after the 72 Hour Evaluation Hold is up, a minor is still considered to be a “danger to him/herself”, “danger to others”, or “gravely disabled”, he/she may be placed as a voluntary or involuntary patient for additional treatment and care up to 14-days under WIC Section 5250.

### Can The Hospital Use Restraints On A Minor?

All hospitals prefer to avoid the use of restraints. They are trained to de-escalate a minor whenever possible. Emergency medication may be used to help calm or contain a minor. Since the safety of your child and others is a primary goal, however, some restraint may be used (physical or prescription) in order to minimize any danger or further escalation.

### What Do I Do If I Have A Complaint?

The Patient Rights booklet provided by the hospital gives you information about what to do if you have concerns. You may contact a Patient’s Rights Advocate or contact the County to file a Grievance. The Patient’s Rights Advocate, from Advocacy Inc. in Santa Cruz County is available M-F 9am-5pm at 831-429-1913.

### How Will My Child Be Discharged From The Hospital?

You may be asked, or you may ask to meet with the Care Manager or Social Worker at the hospital before your child is released. You will be advised of what strategies, medications and follow up will be necessary. Ask questions.

Make sure you have a safety plan in place (staff will work with you on this). Most hospitals may arrange for an appointment with your child’s regular therapist or psychiatrist prior to discharge.

### Can I visit my child in the hospital?

Your participation with your child while hospitalized will be important in your child's stabilization and treatment. Most hospitals will arrange for family therapy, invite you to a family night, and will ask you to come and visit. Only bring items allowed (ask). You will be given copies of paperwork and a Patient Rights booklet.

### What treatment will my child receive?

Call the hospital and ask what will happen. Usually, a Social Worker will track your child's progress. They will help gather together a complete medical history of your child. Your information and the history on your child will be critical. A psychiatrist will meet with your child for evaluation to determine diagnosis, medication adjustments, and recommend a course of action. The psychiatrist will discuss this with you. It will be important to report what medications have or have not been helpful to your child. A therapist may meet with your child individually and in group, some hospitals offer substance abuse groups and other therapies.



### When Does A 72 Hour Hold Occur?

When a minor displays dangerous behavior, a teacher, counselor, police officer or you, the Parent or Caregiver may call for help. Often, the Child Crisis Response staff at the Crisis Stabilization Unit can de-escalate your child and calm down the situation. This is the ideal solution.



A preliminary evaluation is performed to determine if a youth is a "danger to him/ herself", "danger to others", or "gravely disabled". Has the youth hurt themselves or attempted to hurt someone else? Does the youth have a plan to hurt themselves or someone else? Is the youth exhibiting "psychotic" or irrational behaviors that cannot be explained?

If it is determined that hospitalization is required to keep a minor safe, Child Crisis Response staff may call an ambulance to transport the minor to the nearest hospital for further evaluation. You may sign papers for continued treatment of your child after 72 hours as needed.

### Where will my child be taken?

If your child requires hospitalization, there may be a delay while Child Crisis Response staff tries to find an appropriate hospital bed. Laws regulate that minors cannot be placed in a psychiatric hospital with adults. Most hospitals have separate wings for each, but currently in Santa Cruz County, no local hospitals can house a minor under 18 for psychiatric care and treatment. (They may be transported to Santa Clara, San Francisco or other counties).



Child Crisis Response staff will remain with you and your child while they try to find a bed. If your child is suspected of taking unauthorized drugs or alcohol, they must first go to the local hospital emergency room for “medical clearance” before admission to a psychiatric hospital.

If no psychiatric beds are available, your child may be placed temporarily in a separate section of the Crisis Stabilization Unit with adult supervision (staff stay with your child). A psychiatrist may visit your child to do a brief assessment, or other clinical staff may visit.

Other than administering required medications (if your child has prescriptions and staff has your permission), your child will not receive other treatment at this temporary location.

If your child improves before an appropriate bed is found, the psychiatrist may recommend discharge before your child is transferred to an age appropriate psychiatric hospital.

### What happens once my child is transported to an appropriate hospital?

Upon going to a mental health facility designated for the care and treatment of minors, the following may occur: All jewelry, piercings, razors, lighters, knives, or other items that might be used in a harmful way (‘contraband’) will be removed and placed in a locked cabinet or safe and will be returned to your child when they leave.

A staff person will perform an intake, taking all relevant information available (from you, or records sent by Crisis Response staff). If you are not present, you will be contacted to provide additional information, sign papers, and arrange for an appointment. Feel free to call the hospital (give them a couple hours to settle your child in) to find out who will be managing their care, what procedures are, and when you can visit. Your child will be provided with their Patient Rights and the rules and regulations of the hospital. They will be given a schedule of activities which may include schoolwork.

### Can I talk to my child when they are in the hospital?

Your child has the right to make phone calls to you. The hospital will give you a phone number and recommended times for you to call (so it does not interfere with activities, therapy or school).

However, if your child is still agitated, acting out, or considered ‘at risk’, phone calls may be limited due to safety protocols. You can call in and check with staff to see how your child is progressing.

