

Discharge Planning Services For Inmates Who are Receiving Mental Health Treatment in a New York City Jail

New York City provides discharge planning services to all inmates who are receiving mental health treatment in New York City jails. These services are provided pursuant to a settlement agreement in the class action lawsuit *Brad H. v. City of New York*. This brochure describes services your client may have a right to receive under this settlement agreement and explains how to access such services.

What is Discharge Planning?

Discharge planning helps people who need mental health services receive treatment and other essential services outside of jail. It includes an individual assessment of a person's specific needs and can help with:

- Mental health care
- Medications
- Substance abuse treatment
- Case management
- Public benefits such as Medicaid and Public Assistance
- Housing
- Transportation

Who is Eligible for Discharge Planning Services?

Discharge planning services described in this brochure are available to all people who:

- Have received mental health treatment while in jail; OR.
- Have taken medication for a mental health condition while in jail.

Except for people who:

- Were seen by jail mental health staff 2 or fewer times, and were determined to not need any further treatment.
- Are transferred directly from a City jail to a New York State prison (people transferred to a prison have the right to have information about their mental health needs sent with them to the prison so that they can continue their treatment in prison).

How Do Inmates Receive Discharge Planning Services?

Each inmate receives a medical assessment within his or her first 24 hours of incarceration in a City jail. Inmates who may need mental health services will then receive a mental health assessment. People who are assessed as needing mental health

services will be treated and will be offered discharge planning services. As described more fully in the settlement agreement and outlined below, the nature and extent of these services may vary. Inmates can agree to accept – or refuse – some or all of the discharge planning services offered.

What Determines Which Discharge Planning Services Your Client Will Receive?

In jail, a member of the mental health staff will complete a “Comprehensive Treatment and Discharge Plan” for every inmate receiving mental health treatment. This plan describes what treatment the person requires, both in jail and upon release, and creates a plan for how the person will be connected with treatment and services in the community after his or her release.

Because every person has different needs, the discharge planning services each person receives will be different. In creating a Comprehensive Treatment and Discharge Plan, the mental health staff member will consider:

- What your client’s mental health needs are;
- What resources your client has available to him or her in the community;
- How much help your client will need after he or she gets out of jail; and
- How long your client will be in jail.

Other people outside of jail who know your client well – including spouses, friends, relatives, and social workers or case managers – may be involved in the discharge planning process. Your client may ask discharge planning staff to involve people outside of jail, or family or others outside of jail may call discharge planning staff to provide clinical or other information that would help in creating the Comprehensive Treatment and Discharge Plan. Such information may be relayed to mental health and/or discharge planning staff by calling (212) 341-2486 during the hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Monday through Friday, and (718) 546-5200 on all other days and during all other hours.¹ Discharge planning supervisors may be reached during the hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Monday through Friday as follows:

- Michael Ash, Director, Discharge Planning: (718) 546-4026; (212) 676-1257
- Balign Johnson, Deputy Director, Discharge Planning: (212) 442-5745
- Patricia Brown, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Forensic Behavioral Health Services: (212) 341-2468

¹ In order to assist a client in jail, you must know where the individual is housed. It is also helpful to have the individual’s book and case number and NYSID numbers. You may obtain this information by calling NYC Department of Correction Records Department at (212) 266-1500 during business hours. You may also obtain an individual’s housing assignment by calling DOC’s automated information line that operates 24 hours a day at (718) 546-0700 or by using the “Inmate Lookup Service” on the Department of Correction website (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doc/html/home/home.shtml>).

What if Your Client Needs Help Getting Discharge Planning Services after Release from Jail?

If your client needs help obtaining mental health care or other supportive services after he or she is released from jail, your client should go to a SPAN Office. Your client should go to a SPAN Office if:

- your client's discharge plan was not completed prior to his or her release;
- your client was released directly from court;
- your client is confused about how he or she is supposed to get services; or
- your client had difficulty getting services he or she needs.

What is a SPAN Office?

A SPAN Office is a bridge for your client between mental health care and discharge planning services in jail and mental health and other supportive services in the community. SPAN Offices provide discharge planning services and assistance to people who have already been released from jail or were released directly from court.

A person who is released from jail or court without a complete discharge plan or who needs help obtaining services provided for in a discharge plan that was completed in jail can get the discharge plan completed or help in obtaining services if he or she visits a SPAN Office **within 30 days of his or her release**.

People who need mental health medications or prescriptions can obtain them through the SPAN Office if they visit the office on the day they are released.

Where are SPAN Offices Located?

There is a SPAN Office in these boroughs:

Manhattan SPAN Office
80 Centre St. Room 200 B
New York, NY 10013
212-732-7906 (phone)
212-732-7908 (fax)
Hours: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Queens SPAN Office
29-76 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101
718-786-2816 (phone)
718-786-2843 (fax)
Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Brooklyn SPAN Office
408 Jay St., Suite 203
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-625-9736 (phone)
718-626-9739 (fax)
Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Bronx SPAN Office
500 Bergen Avenue, Basement
Bronx, NY 10455
718-590-1235 (phone)
718-538-0165 (fax)
Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

If your client resides in Staten Island, he or she can receive assistance from the Brooklyn or Manhattan SPAN offices.

*If your client experiences a crisis situation during the hours the SPAN Offices are closed, you should call 1-800-LIFENET for assistance. LIFENET is a hotline that operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and provides information and referral services for mental health and substance abuse treatment. LIFENET service is available in several languages:

English: 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638) or 311
Spanish: 1-877-AYÚDESE (1-877-298-3373) or 311
Chinese: Asian LifeNet (1-877-990-8585) or 311
Other languages: 1-800-LIFENET or 311
TTY (hearing impaired): 212-982-5284

What Discharge Planning Services Are Available?

The following services are available to all people who are eligible to receive discharge planning services:

A Discharge Summary

- A discharge summary will be given to your client that explains what his or her mental health diagnosis is, what services he or she needs and the plan that has been set up to make sure that your client can get those services.

Appointments and Referrals to Community Mental Health Services

- Discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will make treatment appointments or referrals to appropriate community mental health programs.
- When an appointment or a referral is made, discharge planning staff will provide your client with a written appointment card with the location of the program and if available, the date and time of the appointment.

Medication and/or Prescriptions

- People released directly from jail will receive a 7-day supply of all psychotropic or psychiatric medications that were being taken in jail and a 21-day prescription for the same medication.
- People released directly from court must visit a SPAN Office on the day of their release if they need psychotropic or psychiatric medication that they were taking in jail. SPAN Office staff will make an appointment for treatment at a community mental health program and help the person obtain a prescription for medication that lasts until the appointment date. Mental health staff will call the

prescription in to a pharmacy and make sure that your client has a way to pay for the prescription, if he or she appears eligible for Medicaid benefits.

Medicaid and the Medication Grant Program

- Discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will assist in having Medicaid benefits reactivated for people who were receiving Medicaid in the year prior to their release from jail.
- For people not eligible for Medicaid benefit reactivation, discharge planning and SPAN Office staff will assist in completing and submitting a Medicaid application and the Human Resources Administration will process this application while the person is in jail.
- The Medication Grant Program (“MGP”) is a New York State program that will pay for psychotropic or psychiatric medications and psychiatric care until your client’s Medicaid application is approved. If your client submitted a Medicaid application while still in jail or within seven days of his or her release from jail, he or she is eligible to be enrolled in the MGP.
- If your client is released from jail without active Medicaid benefits, he or she will be enrolled in the MGP. Your client will receive an MGP card and a list of pharmacies that accept the card on the day that he or she is enrolled in MGP.

Housing or Shelter

- Supportive Housing: Discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will help people who need supportive housing apply for supportive housing with mental health services.
- Shelters: For people who are homeless and don’t have supportive housing by the time they are released, discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will help the person get a bed in a program shelter as soon as possible.

The following additional services are available to people diagnosed as being “Seriously and Persistently Mentally Ill”:

Public Assistance

Discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will help people with serious and persistent mental illness apply to the NYC Human Resources Administration for either the Safety Net Assistance or Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (aka public assistance or welfare). People with serious and persistent mental illness will be able to apply for public assistance benefits and their applications will be processed while they are in jail so that they can get benefits as soon as possible after they are released. When

they are released, applicants must visit an HRA Job Center and an EBT card vendor to activate these public assistance benefits.

- People who need immediate assistance, such as clothing or food, are entitled to receive emergency benefits, including Food Stamps, by visiting an HRA Job Center. Discharge planning or SPAN Office staff will ask people with serious and persistent mental illness questions and provide a form that HRA will use to determine what immediate assistance they may need.
- Workfare Exemption: People who are receiving public assistance will be referred to WeCARE for a psychiatric evaluation to determine whether they should be excused from workfare requirements. The psychiatric evaluation will be conducted on their first visit to WeCARE.

Transportation

Transportation will be arranged to either a person's residence or to an emergency shelter or an intake shelter and then to DHS shelter in which he or she is placed.

How Can I Assist My Client in Receiving Discharge Planning?

A. Encourage Your Client to Accept Discharge Planning:

Occasionally, people refuse discharge planning services because they do not understand what is being offered to them, do not understand that these services are not mandated, or do not understand that they have a right to accept some discharge planning services and refuse others. You should encourage your client to participate in discharge planning efforts and to accept at least some of the services being offered. A person who is eligible to receive discharge planning can ask for these services at any time even if s/he previously refused them. You should also help your client understand that accepting or refusing discharge planning services will not shorten or lengthen his or her incarceration (except in situations where the court has agreed to a treatment alternative to incarceration, in which case accepting discharge planning services may help the client get out of jail).

B. Participate In Discharge Planning:

If you or someone close to your client has clinical information or other information relevant to your client's mental health treatment or discharge planning needs, you should call (212) 341-2486 during the hours 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on Monday through Friday, and (718) 546-5200 on all other days and during all other hours, or contact discharge planning supervisors at the telephone numbers provided on page 2 above. Let your client know that s/he has the right to have a significant other involved in the discharge planning process and s/he can exercise this right by telling the discharge planner who s/he would like to have involved.

Your participation and cooperation may be particularly important if your client is not simply going to be released from jail after serving a sentence, but may instead be required to go to treatment as a condition of release. In this situation, where a judge agrees to a “treatment disposition,” typically the judge will not release the person until a treatment plan is in place. Unless you have another way to connect the person to treatment (e.g., a social worker working with the defense attorney, or an alternative-to-incarceration program in the community that can set up a treatment plan), you need the discharge planning staff in jail to develop a treatment plan so that the person can be released from jail. In such situations, it is crucial that someone (usually the defense attorney) communicate with the discharge planner in jail to make sure that the discharge planner understands what type of treatment plan the judge expects and how soon s/he expects it, and to keep the process moving forward quickly.

Whether your participation is required or volunteered, it is vital that you promptly return any phone calls you may receive from discharge planning staff, and to cooperate fully with their efforts on behalf of your client.

Who Can I Contact for Further Information?

If you have questions about the Discharge Planning Services Program, or if you have a client who you believe is not receiving discharge planning services to which he or she is entitled, please call:

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Office of Forensic Services
212-341-0770

If, after calling this number your client still has not received discharge planning services to which he or she is entitled, you may call the individuals appointed to monitor the City’s compliance with their obligations under the settlement agreement, Erik Roskes or Henry Dlugacz, at 212-219-5530.