

Jessica Gilbert - Ellicottville

Being in Cattaraugus County and in a rural area has been so hindering to my son's mental health journey. He was first hospitalized last April in Olean. No in-person counseling or meeting with family was given at discharge. Just an appointment weeks later and a "good luck" as he went out the door. Since then he has seen 3 different Physician's Assistants. I have never met the actual psychiatrist. His meds have had side effects and he has requested a change in treatment. The PA knew on January 9th that these meds were making him feel "homicidal". The PA said she would talk to the psychiatrist and get back to us with a new plan. No call. On January 11th he start to show signs of mania and consequently psychosis. It worsened and although I spoke to the nurse no changes were suggested or made. On January 17th we were able to get him in a week early for a shot of the medicine he had told them makes him feel homicidal just hoping it would calm the mania and psychosis. It didn't and on January 18th we called the local police and he voluntarily went to the hospital again- we sent him to Jamestown hoping that a new facility will have a better time, treatment plan, and at discharge- a basic safety plan, education for the family and for my son to know the signs of an episode and what to do before it escalates.

This has been the most disgusting process. Weeks between counseling sessions when what he needed was 1-2 sessions per week and into a group program. If you are understaffed in these locations then work with private professionals on a independent contractor basis and pay them what they are worth! They are saving people's lives here! We have been switched to 3 different PAs in his after treatment, never have we met or seen the actual psychiatrist.

He was on a wait list for our local STRAWW but it's been 6 months and I am told they can't add new people because they are understaffed. The SPOA committee started him with the ACT program but since he has private insurance and Medicaid he was released from that program and started with someone else. PROS or Foundations for Living were not discussed or an option because they only accept people with Medicaid- he has private insurance. It is noble to serve the less fortunate but what about the rest of us? There needs to be an AND in that sentence. The only reason it looks good on

paper that you are helping the less fortunate is because you only accept that type of insurance.

Standard of care SHOULD be analysis of vitamins, minerals, toxins, hormones, drugs and a scan of the brain. A holistic, functional medicine is so, so necessary. A change in that treatment and a mix of medicine and fixing imbalances would lead to improvement. Increasing staff and doing to independent contractor status with telehealth is imperative.