

# Script - Print – A Collaboration of Care in Rockford

## A unique protocol for behavioral health patients

It's a constant challenge for many emergency department care givers. The treatment and care of patients who have behavioral or mental health problems.

Dr. Daniel Butterbach, emergency department (ED) medical director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center says a large percentage of patients brought to the hospital ED state as part of their health complaint a mental health issue.

And while Butterbach says psychiatric emergencies are medical emergencies, the ED might not always be the best place for treatment.

Now, working with the City of Rockford Fire Department and Rosecrance, a locally-based mental health treatment facility, Saint Anthony is initiating a new protocol - only the second of its kind in Illinois.

Patients - particularly those being transported by EMT's through 9-1-1 - will be evaluated as to whether they have a mental health issue that might be better treated if triaged to Rosecrance.

With the patient's safety being the number one priority, Butterbach says the initiative will start conservatively.

"We're going to, again, look at patients that are cooperative," says Dr. Daniel Butterbach, emergency department medical director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Patient that are in agreement with going there instead of going to the emergency department. Patient that the, that are - the EMS paramedics feel are medically stable in terms of their vital signs, in terms of their orientation."

Butterbach says ED personnel, as well as regional EMT's are being trained on the new protocol and that it will take time to determine best practices.

Still, he believes this can eventually ease congestion in the ED, because now some mental health patients face extended stays in the ED. Hours, sometime beyond.

"And this is happening all over the state, all over the country," says Dr. Daniel Butterbach, emergency department medical director at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "And, you know, it's contributing to the mental health crisis to have a patient that's having a psychiatric issue sit in an emergency department for a day or two is more than suboptimal, Its really - its really kind of frightening care for psychiatric patients. So, even if it effects - even if were just effecting, you know, even if we're able to send a couple of patients there a week, say. But, if it's some patients who would have been in our emergency department for a long period of time, that has an effect."

The new protocol has already been approved by a Rockford City Council committee and is expected to be passed by the full Council Monday.

With that, Dr. Butterbach expects the protocol to be fully operational by the end of April.