



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMUNITY BOARD 9
MANHATTAN

Morningside Heights
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February 20, 2023

Mr. Kenneth L. Davis, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer
of the Mount Sinai Health System
1468 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10029

Dear Kenneth L. Davis,

At its regularly scheduled General Board Meeting held in hybrid on Thursday, February 16, 2023 Manhattan Community Board No. 9 passed the following Letter of Support re: Mt. Sinai Adolescent Patient Care Services by a unanimous vote with 38 members present.

A distressing situation regarding a pediatric psychiatry patient interaction at Mount Sinai Hospital Emergency Room at Madison Avenue Campus has come to the attention of the Manhattan Community Board 9. The parent and, as we were told, her 13-year-old child were so stressed and emotionally abused by their experience that the mother reached out to our General Board for help in addressing the two-day incident. Upon hearing her account, the collective response was one of familiarity where others knew of and/or felt it echoed concerns expressed by others within the last year. We know that situations like these can persist and be reflective of institutional class, ethnic, racial and cultural biases. The advantage this mother has is her social capital. Many in our neighborhoods do not have the resources/skills to tackle the manifold layers of handling complaints of this nature, nor the knowledge of their rights regarding abuse and/ or inadequate services at medical facilities and institutions. **Community Board 9 is requesting from Mount Sinai the current protocol that is used when dealing with a pediatric psychiatric emergency such as written in the ATTACHMENT to this letter.**

According to the parent: "I am bringing the following sequence of events to your attention so that you can understand the multiple failures in communication and policy at Mount Sinai Hospital that my child and I experienced over a two-day period. The story gets progressively worse and demonstrates the absolute failure in care for adolescents experiencing mental health issues at Mount Sinai. Furthermore, its demonstrations failure in communication between the hospital and its patients including unacceptable and unprofessional treatment by hospital staff."

Moreover, based on the testimony given by the parent (Ms. Ilana Mercado), the matter calls into question whether Mount Sinai failed to deliver care per its own mission statement.

ATTACHMENT; IMERCADOLETTER; INCIDENT-11/17/2022

1. Mount Sinai not only failed to provide an adequate standard of care but also failed to provide the care described in their own mission statement.

“The mission of the Mount Sinai Health System is to provide compassionate patient care with seamless coordination...” My child and I were not provided compassionate patient care, I was mocked, ignored, and intimidated for trying to advocate for the well-being of my minor child who has anxiety and depression and was placed without warning or explanation in a high stress, unsanitary environment where they were exposed to abusive behavior between adult psychiatric patients and security guards and where my child, a minor, was exposed to sexually graphic language by an adult psychiatric patient. Furthermore, Mount Sinai failed to provide seamless coordination in patient care, neglecting to tell me that my child was placed in the pediatric ER the first time as a courtesy and that their standard policy is to put 13-year-old children in the adult psych ward. Had I known this I would have made sure they were treated elsewhere.

“The Mount Sinai Health System’s vision is to continue to grow and challenge convention through our pioneering spirit, scientific advancements, forward-thinking leadership, and collaborative approach to providing exceptional patient care in the many unique communities we serve.” Mount Sinai’s policy of placing 13-year-olds, and even 12-year-olds (as stated to me by one of the psychiatric nurses) in the adult psych ward with emotionally disturbed adult patients, some displaying violent behavior, is unacceptable and desperately needs to be re-examined. An age-appropriate solution needs to be created for young adolescents experiencing self-harm, anxiety and other emotional/mental health issues. I would like to understand how having a policy of placing 12 and 13-year-old children in the adult psych ward is “forward thinking” or “exceptional patient care”. If my child broke their wrist they would be admitted to the pediatric ER where there is nurturing age appropriate care, but if they have mentioned thoughts of self-harm they will be put with adult psychiatric patients, some exhibiting violent behavior, without any barrier between them in a hostile environment with poorly trained and unprofessional security guards. How does this make any sense?

2. Sequence of events, Thursday 11/17/22 through Friday 11/18/22.

I have two children an 11-year-old and a 13-year-old. The 13-year-old has been experiencing anxiety, depression and the symptoms of a tic disorder. These issues have come about during the pandemic. I have been trying since June to get them counseling services since their counseling program expired after a year. It has been very difficult to find psychological services that take insurance and even harder to find psychiatric services, with many places not taking new patients or some that have month’s long waitlists. I was able to get my child an appointment at the Mount Sinai pediatric neurology department for their tics and obtained a follow up in November. Additionally, after trying for 6 weeks, I was able to get an intake interview for psychological services at the Mount Sinai Adolescent Behavioral Health Center.

EMS took us to the Mount Sinai ER and instead of taking my child to the pediatric ER they took them to the adult psych ward, without telling me that's where we were going or where they were taking my child. I was still under the assumption that they would move them to pediatric ER like the prior night. Security told me to sit in the waiting room while they took my child inside the ward.

My 13 year old child was put in a waiting room with adult mentally ill patients who were screaming and threatening violence with the security guards. One man was demanding to be released or he would lose his bed at the shelter and was screaming "I need to wash my dick" in front of my child. My child later disclosed that he was also yelling about someone putting a tracking device in his anus.

Immediately, I told the security guard via the contact phone that my child should not be around this and that I wanted to talk to the doctor. The guard was very rude and unprofessional and dismissed me saying they have security with my child. I said that is not the point this is not a healthy environment for a child who suffers from anxiety is already not in a good place emotionally.

I asked the security guard for a social worker, they told me there's no social worker, it's after hours. I said I dealt with one last night in the pediatric ER. They said I have to ask a nurse but they were busy and I had to wait. The screams were getting louder from the adult patients so I demanded they get my child so I can ask if they are ok. Security mocked me. One guard told the other not to pick up the phone, so I tapped on the window until they did. I said I would call the police if they didn't let me talk to my child, so they brought them to the window, and I asked if they were ok in there and they said NO!!!

I then told the security guard that my child is not ok they need to be put back in the pediatric ER, I am once again demanding to speak to the doctor or to be provided with the number for a social worker and again I was ignored. Another guard said my child is just saying they are not ok in there because they probably want to just go home, I said are you kidding me?

After being ignored by the medical staff and mocked by security I ran out to the hallway and flagged down a nurse who took me to the assistant manager, Zeeta Conception. I told her my child was in the pediatric ER last night and I didn't understand why they were taken to the adult psych ward for the exact same thing. She was very condescending and said 13 is the cut off age for the adult psych ward. One of the security guards from the psych ward followed me and said I can't just go in there and talk to her. It felt like he was a bouncer at a club trying to intimidate me. Is this how the parents of minor patients are supposed to be treated? Apparently Mount Sinai thinks so. Finally, a psych nurse came out and told me they have children as young as 12 and said that my child was taken to the pediatric ER last night because there was something physically wrong with them and now it's psych, so they are here. I corrected her and said last

The triage nurse told me if we have to go back to the ER to go to Bellevue, because they have an age-appropriate psych ward and 13-year-olds would not be placed with emotionally disturbed adults.

On the way home I had to calm my child down after what they experienced. They said they were scared and told me that even though they were placed in a private room with two security guards outside, the guards were not always at the door but were at the front desk socializing with the other security guards there. They said the room they were in was filthy and there was blood on the walls and unknown stains on the floor. They said they were too afraid to go to the bathroom because of everything going on around them. Is this appropriate treatment for a child who is suffering from anxiety and has expressed thoughts of self-harm, to be placed in this stressful environment where they feel unsafe? Apparently, this is the level of care of that Mount Sinai feels is appropriate for children. So now after two days of "treatment" at Mount Sinai Hospital and at the Adolescent Behavioral Health Center, we are back to square one where my child has no guaranteed mental health services, and they are left even more anxious and traumatized by their experience. Additionally, I spent over \$100 of much-needed money on cab fare which could have been avoided. I am just one person with this one experience and I wonder how many other people are experiencing similar issues at Mount Sinai?

I want answers and I want accountability as to how all these failures came to be and how the policy of placing minor children in the adult psychiatric ward is deemed appropriate. I would like to see this policy addressed with the public on a community level and I would hope reconsidered in light of a better age-appropriate policy.