

Unity Center certification at risk as OHA documents suicide attempts, patient self-harm

Portland Business Journal

August 3, 2018

<https://www.bizjournals.com/portland/news/2018/08/03/unity-center-certification-at-risk-as-oha.html>

The Oregon Health Authority on Friday outlined deficiencies at Portland's Unity Center for Behavioral Health that jeopardized patient safety, indicating the facility was placed on a 90-day notice in May of losing federal certification.

The psychiatric facility, which has 107 beds and an emergency room for mental health emergencies, had closed to new admissions earlier this week in response to OHA's ongoing investigation, but was starting to ramp up to normal operations.

Surveyors from OHA's Health Facility Survey & Certification Program started investigating Unity Center in February after receiving a complaint about patient and staff safety.

"Unity Center was working to formulate an acceptable corrective action plan when new allegations surfaced in late July," prompting state health officials to return to the facility, OHA said in a statement issued late Friday.

Unity is working to develop corrective actions to maintain its certification “while continuing to serve vulnerable patients with severe mental illness,” OHA said.

The agency said it discontinued its survey of the facility in April, following Unity’s refusal to permit surveyors to remove requested photocopied documents from the premises. They returned to Unity in mid-May and incorporated additional concerns related to patients’ rights that were uncovered during the interim.

On May 18, surveyors told the hospital that “an immediate jeopardy situation existed after observations, interviews, review of medical records and incident/event investigation documents in staff personnel records, and review of policies and procedures, revealed numerous hazards in the physical environment, a lack of patient supervision and lack of clear protocols for response to medical emergencies. Hazards observed during the survey and documentation reflected actual harm to patients, patient attempts at self-harm and suicide attempts.”

Unity, which is operated by Legacy Health in collaboration with other area hospitals, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The hospital submitted a written plan to remove the immediate jeopardy on May 21, and the next day, surveyors agreed the jeopardy was removed. But Unity was also placed on a “termination track” of 90 days. The track is the

number of days until the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services terminates its certification, ending Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement.

OHA surveyors revisited Unity on July 23 to review the hospital's efforts to return to compliance and review new patient health and safety concerns.

Four days later, OHA surveyors told the hospital that a second "immediate jeopardy" situation existed. Surveyors found continued hazards in the physical environment, continued lack of assessment and observation of patients at risk.

Surveyors remained on site until the hospital developed another immediate jeopardy mitigation plan on July 28. Unity has 10 days to submit a plan of correction, to be reviewed by OHA.

[Adding to its woes, Unity was fined earlier this year](#) by the state's

Occupational Safety and Health Division and was sued by two former nurses who allege they were fired after voicing safety concerns.