

Patient Safety Learning Advisory

Patient Safety Event:

Elopement

Why was this a Critical Incident?

The patient left the healthcare facility on a pass. They did not return in the scheduled time frame, and were later found deceased.

What happened in the incident?

Patient on approved leave pass with family and did not return to unit. Patient found deceased four days later.

The patient signed out, with plans to come back at a specific time

The patient was dropped off at the main entrance to the unit before the set time, but it was found they never went inside the building.

What is the Health Care System learning?

The patient did not return to the unit at the expected time.

There was a time delay in contacting the family about the patient not returning.

The start of the elopement procedure was delayed.

What are the recommendations?

Review policies about leave passes and elopement to make sure procedures are clear and actions are taken on time.

Teach about the new leave pass policy, making sure everyone knows that the person with the patient should talk to staff before leaving and when the patient returns.

Keywords: elopement, death, pass, leave pass

Glossary:

Elopement - Patient elopement is when individuals who require supervision for their safety leave a unit or facility, without staff knowledge of their absence.

Leave Pass - When a patient leaves on a pass, it means they have permission to temporarily leave the facility, usually for a specific reason like a family visit or personal errands. The pass outlines the conditions of their departure and how long they can be gone.

Your privacy is important to us, so in this summary we have removed any details which would help identify the subject of this event. It's important that we can learn from safety events and make changes to improve the care we provide.

