



# **Emergency Department Treatment of the Psychiatric Patient: Policy Issues and Legal Requirements (American Psychology-Law Society Series)**

*Susan Stefan*

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Many hospital emergency departments are overcrowded and short-staffed, with a limited number of available hospital beds. It is increasingly hard for emergency departments and their staff to provide the necessary level of care for medical patients. Caring for people with psychiatric disabilities raises different issues and calls on different skills. In *Emergency Department Treatment of the Psychiatric Patient*, Dr. Stefan uses research, surveys, and statutory and litigation materials to examine problems with emergency department care for clients with psychiatric disorders. She relies on interviews with emergency department nurses, doctors and psychiatrists, as well as surveys of people with psychiatric disabilities to present the perspectives of both the individuals seeking treatment, and those providing it. This eye-opening book explores the structural pressures on emergency departments and identifies the burdens and conflicts that undermine their efforts to provide compassionate care to people in psychiatric crisis. In addition to presenting a new analysis of the source of these problems, Dr. Stefan also suggests an array of alternatives to emergency department treatment for people in psychiatric crisis. Moreover, the author proposes standards for treatment of these individuals when they do inevitably end up in a hospital emergency department. *Emergency Department Treatment of the Psychiatric Patient* presents a thoughtful and thorough analysis of the difficulties faced by people with psychiatric disabilities when seeking emergency medical care. It is essential reading for anyone working in a hospital emergency department, as well as health care policy makers, and advocates and lawyers for people with psychiatric disabilities.

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