

Case Study: Improving Suicide Prevention at Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Paula Hospital

Challenge

Ventura County Medical Center and Santa Paula Hospital in Southern California faced significant staffing challenges stemming from the overflow of mental health patients coming through the emergency department. New regulations in 2019 required suicide risk screening for all patients, adding to the workload of the psychiatric team responsible for evaluating every patient. This situation led to bottlenecks and jeopardized compliance with the new regulations.

Solution

To address these challenges, the hospitals partnered with LocumTenens.com to hire virtual licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs). Initially focusing on the Emergency Department, the virtual LCSWs provided expanded coverage. Utilizing the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) for initial screenings by ER nurses, flagged patients were then assessed by the virtual LCSWs. HIPAA-compliant technology and remote staff facilitated timely virtual consultations, ensuring patients received necessary care without delay.



The virtual LCSW program has been a game-changer for our hospital. This solution helped us manage our staffing shortages and meet vital suicide prevention regulations. Our ER physicians and psychiatric team now have the support they need, and our patients receive better care faster.”

*Danielle Gabele, Chief Nurse Executive,
Ventura County Medical Center*



Results

Improved Care: Enhanced patient care with timely suicide risk assessments by virtual LCSWs, assessing 112 patients per month on average and expanding coverage beyond the conventional 8 am–5 pm window.

Increased Efficiency: Reduced workload for ER physicians and psychiatrists.

Extended Staffing Effectiveness: Maintained a team of LCSWs across 35+ units and two facilities.

Cost-Effectiveness: Met regulatory requirements without the high cost of full-time staff.

112

AVERAGE ASSESSMENTS
COMPLETED PER MONTH
BY VIRTUAL LCSWs

35+

UNITS ACROSS
TWO FACILITIES