



# MARYLAND ACTION COALITION

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## FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

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### **How We Turned "Never" into "Now": The Rapid and Intentional Manifestation of a COVID-19 Psychiatric Unit**

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#### **Abstract**

**Background:** Since the onset of COVID-19, many people have faced fear of the unknown. How did I get this virus? When is this going away? Will I get the treatment I need? For a patient diagnosed with COVID-19 and a mental illness, that last question was a source of anxiety.

**Objectives:** To meet the challenge of patients requiring admission to a psychiatric unit who tested positive for COVID-19.

**Methods:** In December of 2021, the leadership of University of Maryland Medical Center- Midtown Campus' Adult Inpatient Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) discussed strategies to meet the challenge of COVID-19 positive patients in need of psychiatric care. An interdisciplinary team including nursing, medicine, infection prevention, patient safety and risk management developed a plan to meet this challenge for our hospital and hospitals across the state of Maryland. The decision was to utilize one of the unit's two separate care spaces, 6 North, exclusively for COVID-19 patients.

Actions Taken included the following:

1. Assessment and modification of environment by Infection Prevention in collaboration with facilities.
2. Assessment and redesign of workflow for shared patient spaces between both care areas.
3. Assessment of staff knowledge of use of PPE, transmission of the virus, and decontamination of high touch surfaces.
4. Education of staff, including Providers, Social Workers, and Occupational Therapists on use of PPE, transmission of virus, and decontamination of high touch surfaces.
5. Development of new staffing patterns to diminish burn out by alternating weeks on COVID positive and COVID negative units
6. Creation of inclusion and exclusion admission criteria.
7. Development of an algorithm for medical support in the event of new or worsening somatic complaints

The 6 North BHU was opened exclusively for COVID 19 patients from January 12, 2022 to Feb 9, 2022. The 6 North BHU admitted a total of 34 patients during this time. Eighteen patients were admitted from six different University of Maryland Medical System hospitals. The remaining 16 were admitted from outside hospitals in the state of Maryland.

**Results:** The unit was successful in consolidating resources to meet the needs of COVID 19 adult psychiatric patients in the state of Maryland who required inpatient hospitalization.

By the time the unit closed on February 9, 2022, 6 North discharged home 22 COVID recovered patients. The remaining COVID recovered patients were able to be moved to the non COVID care area, 6 South.