

## Outstanding Customer Service Initiative

### UCHealth Patient Watch Program

#### Situation

Allied Universal prides itself on the level of customer service it provides in the healthcare environment. One example is the UCHealth Patient Watch Program, designed to maintain the safety of the patient, hospital staff, and visitors in a courteous, professional and empathic manner. UCHealth—a nationally recognized, nonprofit network of seven acute care hospitals and clinics that operates throughout Colorado, southern Wyoming and western Nebraska—is anchored by its academic partner University of Colorado Hospital, an award-winning institution.

To accomplish its goal of quality care and service in a caring manner, security professionals must project and maintain a positive image through their actions, attitude, conduct and interactions with patients, visitors and staff to promote trust and a sense of protection and well-being.

#### Challenge

Patient Watch Officers are assigned to patients who present a danger to themselves or others in both the Emergency Department and in-patient units. Continuous observation and a direct line of sight of the patient are essential. Security personnel can be responsible for one or up to four patients. The program requires team members who are highly trained in de-escalation knowledge and skills to include both verbal and physical techniques.

The Security Watch service is used when a patient:

- is a danger to him/herself or others
- has attempted suicide or has suicidal thoughts
- is homicidal
- is under the influence of an unknown substance such as drugs and/or alcohol
- is physically combative and/or aggressive with the medical staff

In addition to ensuring the safety and well-being of patients, visitors and staff, other important benefits of this program include the more efficient and effective use of medical staff to care for patients by freeing nurses and nursing assistants from watching one patient and allowing them to provide care to several patients. Also, patients are able to be moved out of restraints more quickly.

“The safer nurses feel at work, the more confidence they portray, which increases their satisfaction and reduces turnover. All save the hospital money by more effective use of medical staff and increase the care and satisfaction of their patients,” says Jim Strife, UCHealth Director of Security. “The officers’ presence and skill also lower the number of crisis team responses and resources needed. Team observations, documented every 15 minutes, provide additional information on a patient’s status to the medical staff.”

#### Location:

Based in Colorado

#### Program Statistics:

- > Began in 2010
- > 300-plus patients/week
- > Over 2,300 hours/week



How did it begin? In 2010, the Patient Watch Program commenced in the Emergency Department of one hospital where 20-30 patients (400 hours per week) were being watched by security professionals each week. Because of the successes and cost effectiveness of the program, it has grown to all seven UCHHealth hospital Emergency Departments and in-patient areas. Security professionals now provide patient watch services to more than 300 patients per week (over 2,300 hours per week).

The core of this program is contained in the words “patients first” and requires security officers to be at their very best in every one-on-one interaction with patients, their families and medical staff. There is no hiding or standing back. “The Patient Watch Officers are part of the team that puts the patient’s care plan in action and are there to help keep the patient calm and in control so that the medical staff can concentrate on exceptional patient care without fear of being injured,” Strife says.

### Testimonials

The following are examples of attesting to the program’s impact on stakeholders and its success:

- When a young patient that required a Patient Watch Officer to keep her safe was discharged with her grandfather, she immediately saw the officer, who was watching another patient, and said “Poppa! This is the man who kept me safe!” Both she and her grandfather were very grateful and they both thanked him for his help. *Patient Access Lead*
- “The two officers that have been watching room 958 should be recognized. They were both amazing with this patient... In multiple situations, they both were able to keep him calm and genuinely form a bond with him. I found them laughing and joking with the patient, which not many have seen, and it was so appreciated! It really made a difference in my day.” *In-Patient Registered Nurse*
- “I just wanted to recognize a security officer. We had a very demanding, intoxicated patient today and the officer went above and beyond, helping to calm the patient and facilitating an earlier release from restraints.” *ED Registered Nurse*

These are but a few of the ways the team knows the program is working. The Patient Watch Program continues to be successful and grow to all units in the UCHHealth system because it uses the greatest strengths of both security personnel and the medical staff. Patient Watch Officers help patients stay calm and in control. When that is not possible they use other tools and techniques with the ultimate purpose of keeping the patient safe. That gives the medical staff the confidence and opportunity to provide the best patient-centered care possible. Teamwork, communication, and mutual respect among all security and medical staff make this program extremely impactful on patient, visitor, and staff safety, care and satisfaction.



In 2017, UCHHealth and Allied Universal received the ASIS Outstanding Security Performance Award for Outstanding Customer Service Initiative, further signifying the program’s phenomenal impact and results. The award is not only a testament to the program, but to the collaborative stakeholders who make it a success. In the above photo, Strife accepts the award from Rich Widup, past ASIS President, and Steve Amitay, Executive Director of the National Association of Security Companies. More information about UCHHealth can be found at <https://www.uchealth.org>.