

ASSEMBLY, No. 4391

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 16, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman HERB CONAWAY, JR.

District 7 (Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Requires hospitals to establish sensory friendly treatment and waiting rooms in emergency department settings.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 7/16/2020)

1 **AN ACT** concerning sensory friendly rooms in hospital emergency
2 departments and supplementing Title 26 of the Revised Statutes.

3
4 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
5 *of New Jersey:*

6
7 1. a. (1) Each general hospital and satellite emergency
8 department shall establish at least one pediatric and one adult
9 emergency department treatment room designed for exclusive use in
10 the treatment or observation of individuals with a developmental
11 disability, autism spectrum disorder, or other neurological or mental
12 health condition that may cause the individuals to become agitated,
13 distressed, overstimulated, upset, aggressive, or disoriented when
14 encountering conditions typical to a hospital emergency department,
15 including loud noises, bright lights, and busy or frenetic activity.

16 (2) These designated treatment rooms shall be designed using an
17 evidence-based approach to addressing the sensory needs of
18 individuals with a developmental disability, autism spectrum
19 disorder, or other neurological or mental health condition that may
20 cause the individuals to become agitated, distressed, overstimulated,
21 upset, aggressive, or disoriented by the conditions of the emergency
22 department. The designated treatment rooms shall isolate occupants
23 of the room from the intrusive sights and sounds of the emergency
24 department, but shall be readily accessible by facility staff to
25 provide treatment and other patient services.

26 b. (1) No later than one year after the effective date of this act,
27 each general hospital and satellite emergency department shall
28 establish a designated sensory friendly waiting space within the
29 facility's emergency department for the use of individuals with a
30 developmental disability, autism spectrum disorder, or other
31 neurological or mental health condition that may cause the
32 individual to become agitated, distressed, overstimulated, upset,
33 aggressive, or disoriented when encountering conditions typical to a
34 hospital emergency department, including loud noises, bright lights,
35 and busy or frenetic activity.

36 (2) The designated sensory friendly waiting space shall be
37 designed in a manner that isolates the space from the sights and
38 sounds of the emergency department, but which is readily
39 accessible by facility staff and permits ready communications with
40 family members of emergency department patients who are utilizing
41 the designated sensory friendly waiting area.

42 c. Each general hospital and satellite emergency department
43 shall develop written policies and procedures concerning the use of
44 the designated treatment rooms required pursuant to paragraph (1)
45 of subsection a. of this section and the designated sensory friendly
46 waiting area required pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection b. of
47 this section.

1 d. Each general hospital and satellite emergency department
2 shall require all emergency department staff to complete a training
3 program approved by the Commissioner of Health concerning
4 interactions that occur in the emergency department setting with
5 individuals who have a developmental disability, autism spectrum
6 disorder, or other neurological or mental health condition. The
7 training program shall include informational materials and practical
8 techniques to minimize potential stressors and mitigate the
9 traumatic effects of a visit to the hospital emergency department for
10 such individuals.

11 e. As used in this section, “general hospital and satellite
12 emergency department” means such a facility licensed by the
13 Department of Health pursuant to P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et
14 seq.).

15
16 2. The Commissioner of Health, pursuant to the
17 “Administrative Procedures Act,” P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et
18 seq.), and in consultation with the Division of Mental Health and
19 Addiction Services and the Division of Developmental Disabilities
20 in the Department of Human Services, shall adopt rules and
21 regulations to effectuate the purposes of this act.

22
23 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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28 This bill requires general hospitals and satellite emergency
29 departments to designate one pediatric and one adult sensory
30 friendly treatment room, as well as one sensory friendly waiting
31 area, within the facility’s emergency department for the express use
32 of individuals with a developmental disability, autism spectrum
33 disorder, or other neurological or mental health condition that may
34 cause the individual to become agitated, distressed, overstimulated,
35 upset, aggressive, or disoriented when encountering conditions
36 typical to a hospital emergency department, including loud noises,
37 bright lights, and busy or frenetic activity. The designated
38 treatment rooms and waiting area are to be designed in a manner
39 that isolates the occupants from the sights and sounds of the
40 emergency department, while also being readily accessible by
41 facility staff.

42 Hospitals and satellite emergency departments will be required to
43 develop written policies and procedures concerning the use of the
44 designated treatment rooms and waiting area, and will additionally
45 be required to ensure that all emergency department staff complete
46 a training program approved by the Commissioner of Health
47 concerning interactions in the emergency department setting with
48 individuals who have a developmental disability, autism spectrum

1 disorder, or other neurological or mental health condition. The
2 training program is to include both informational materials and
3 practical techniques to minimize potential stressors and mitigate the
4 traumatic effects of an emergency department visit for such
5 individuals.

6 This bill also requires hospitals to designate the pediatric and
7 adult treatment rooms immediately, and to establish the sensory
8 friendly waiting areas within one year after the date the bill is
9 enacted.