

My son is currently in an inpatient mental health unit for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time. He started using marijuana and alcohol in high school. About two years ago during a period of sobriety we began to notice erratic, concerning behaviors with increasing frequency and intensity.

We were able to get him to a medical professional. The provider started our son on some medication, but he was unable or unwilling to consistently take the medication as directed. Their mental health continued to deteriorate and he started using marijuana to self-medicate. He would lay for hours in the dark, was unable to maintain a conversation, and became increasingly paranoid, - not leaving the house for days at a time. He would be awake at all hours of the night.

We continued to try to get him help. We scheduled virtual appointments with a doctor but he was often too ill to be able to sit through an appointment without walking away. His behavior became more erratic and there were many nights that we slept behind locked doors because we did not feel safe. We reached out to the crisis team and they did try speak with him for about 45 minutes. We were told we had to try to get him to the hospital. Our loved one was too scared and paranoid to go. He had no insight into his illness.

He began to become more aggressive and threatening to the point we reached out to the crisis team for the second time and were directed to the police. The police came to our home and we were told "Until they physically harm someone there is nothing we can do unless they are willing to go to the hospital. We can see by their eyes and speech that they are having some sort of delusions but if they aren't actively harming themselves or someone else, so our hands are tied." My husband asked "so we just have to wait until they hurt someone and hopefully don't kill them until anything can be done?" The response was "unfortunately, yes."

Two months later as my husband was preparing dinner my son walked into the kitchen and started punching him. My husband was able to hold him off until he just walked away and laid down. The police were called and he was taken to jail. He spent two nights there. Upon release there was one officer who noticed how poor his mental health was and thankfully decided to bring him to the hospital instead of releasing him to the street. He was placed on a 72-hr hold followed by a transfer to an inpatient mental health unit.

He was civilly committed and then was discharged to an outpatient mental health program which we discovered he didn't qualify for. Within a few months he began skipping appointments with his therapist and psychiatrist. Due to missing appointments, he was discharged from their provider's care with a 30-day prescription for psychiatric medications.

By that summer his symptoms were getting worse, and it was clear his medication was no longer keeping the symptoms at bay despite being on a long-acting injectable antipsychotic.

By the fall he was again self-medicating. He started drinking Kratom drinks daily to silence the voices. He wasn't sleeping, he was behaving more erratically, more paranoid, and more dangerous.

We begged for his case worker, doctor, anyone to step in and get them into some sort of program. Our pleas went unanswered.

As the holidays approached the paranoia reached a peak. He was accusing nearly every member of his family of having done horrific things. He had delusions about former friends that he hadn't spoken to in years. He had threatening behavior that was dangerous to himself and others. Our concerns continued to be dismissed and ignored.

Then he directly threatened me and other relatives. We called the police again. The officer again told us that unless he actively hurts someone, they cannot violate his rights even though he was currently under a civil commitment. Several days later he told a relative that he wanted to kill her. The police were again called and we were told that would not be enough for them to take him to the hospital.

Finally after a very long evening the police were called a 3<sup>rd</sup> time. My son was screaming in my face about how he should kill me, convinced that I had tried to poison them. When the officers arrived they told me and my mother that we were "making him agitated and should probably leave for the night and get a hotel". Finally he willingly left with the paramedics to go to the hospital.

He was there for 40 days and then was discharged to an IRTS. He was withdrawn, sedated, and hardly able to carry a continued conversation during visits. His behavior was becoming more disruptive and he was discharged because he needed a higher level of care than what was available in the IRTS program.

A police officer was called. When the officer arrived, he told him he was bringing them to the train station and he could go to a shelter. He was given no food, a bag full of medications with no instructions on what and when to take, and no money or identification. Thankfully he came with me and was admitted to the inpatient mental health unit.

This is where we stand today. In a year and a half, there have been three inpatient hospitalizations and our loved one continues to be tortured by voices, delusions, and paranoia. They have been suffering, our family has been suffering. He was once an athletic, charismatic, and outgoing young person with countless friends. He is now isolated and suffering within his own mind all day every day. The person he was before this is still there as is their potential to live a long, happy, fulfilling life is as well, if he can get the right care.

This experience has taken a toll on our entire family. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially and we feel like we are in the same position we were in before their first hospitalization when so much of this was avoidable.

We need to do better as a society for people with mental illnesses who need help. I have been advocating for my child every step of the way throughout this process and have had to fight tooth and nail to get them the treatment they needed – with insurance companies, providers, police, and more. With early intervention and treatment follow through, much of what our loved one and our family has had to endure could have been avoided. Please pass this bill, please invest in our mental health system.