Levels of Mental Health Care: A Guide for Students and Parents

**Outpatient Therapy** – There is wide variety of outpatient settings (private practice therapists and psychiatrists, Community Mental Health Agencies). This can be brief (2-12 sessions) or long-term and ongoing. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at UVA provides brief therapy. Students utilize CAPS on average 4-6 sessions. Typically outpatient settings are only one or two, 50 minute sessions per week. Typically CAPS sessions are weekly or biweekly.

**Intensive outpatient programs (IOPs)** are more intensive than outpatient therapy. They often involve longer sessions and more frequent sessions per week (three or four hours per session a few times per week). Sometimes they meet during evening hours to accommodate persons who are working. Most IOPs focus on either substance abuse or mental health issues. IOPs may be part of a hospital’s services or freestanding.

**Partial hospitalization programs (PHPs)** refer to outpatient programs that patients attend for six or more hours a day, every day or most days of the week. These programs, which are less intensive than inpatient hospitalization, may focus on psychiatric illnesses and/or substance abuse. They will commonly offer group therapy, educational sessions and individual counseling. A PHP may be part of a hospital's services or a freestanding facility. Patients in these programs sleep at home each evening.

**Crisis Stabilization Units** are voluntary and involve staying overnight for up to 14 days. The closest programs to UVA are Wellness Recovery run by Region Ten Community Services Board in Charlottesville and Arbor House in Harrisonburg, VA. Group and Individual therapies are offered, as well as medication management, and alternative therapies (yoga, acupuncture, etc). These are focused on learning coping skills and building a sense of hope with a recovery focus.

**Inpatient Hospitalization** are for acute stabilization and usually last a few days, however can last up to 30 days. Acute hospitalization may be voluntary or involuntary (patients can be detained under a Temporary Detention Order if they are deemed in imminent danger to themselves or others). Acute hospitalization is usually to establish safety and to develop a treatment plan for after the initial crisis period.

**Residential Mental Health Treatment** generally provides longer-term (over 30 days) care for individuals. Most residential treatment settings provide medical care but are designed to be more comfortable and less like a hospital ward than inpatient hospitals.