

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Pathways to Recovery: meeting patients where they are

A hospital-wide effort at Los Angeles General is closing the gap between an ER visit and lasting treatment for opioid use disorder — one handoff at a time.

Getting a dose of medication in the emergency department is only step one. Staying connected to care afterward is what actually changes the course of someone's recovery — and that's the harder part.

That's the problem Pathways to Recovery was built to solve. Led by the LA County Department of Health Services, the program gives patients fast access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) and then, critically, helps them navigate what comes next.

It isn't confined to one unit. The program threads through the emergency department, psychiatric ED, inpatient medicine, surgery, obstetrics, pediatrics, addiction medicine, pharmacy, and social work — and reaches into the field through a partnership with LA Fire Department EMS.



Built for patients who fall through the cracks

The program is designed around people who often lose contact with care after they leave the hospital: patients experiencing homelessness, people involved in the justice system, pregnant and postpartum patients, and young people.

Social work and community health worker teams embed directly into daily hospital workflows, then route more complex needs — housing, food, legal aid — out to community organizations. Practical touches make the difference: geolocator-enabled follow-up for patients without stable housing, a harm-reduction vending machine stocked with health supplies, and youth-specific support that includes rent-stabilizing cash aid and a youth advisory board.

- Screening & referral tracked in the EHR
- Lifeline phone enrollment for re-contact
- Naloxone "leave behind" kits via EMS
- Buprenorphine initiation in the field

Reaching further after an overdose

The newest layer of the program starts before a patient ever reaches the hospital. Through EMS-based overdose initiatives, first responders now leave naloxone kits with patients — and often with their friends, family, or roommates — right at the scene of a nonfatal overdose, alongside buprenorphine initiation.

Every touchpoint, from the ambulance to the pharmacy counter, is a chance to keep someone connected to care.

To keep the work going, the program bills Medi-Cal for community health worker engagement services, helping fund ongoing navigation and follow-up for the patients who need it most.

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