

# SAFEGUARDS in Three Emergency Departments



Evaluation of the adaptation and impact of the Safeguards Model in emergency departments

## BACKGROUND

Safeguards is a model of practice improvement that has been used to promote a **therapeutic response to minimise conflict events in mental health in-patient settings**. This pilot project (Safeguards ED) evaluated the impact of nine modified Safeguards interventions in three emergency departments (EDs) within 2 health services in Victoria, Australia.

A mixed method approach including: (a) **questionnaire**, (b) **focus groups**, and (c) **observational cohort studies** of conflict events (code grey) and coercive interventions (restraint and medication used to manage patient behaviour); was used to evaluate the Safeguards ED interventions 12 months before and 6 months after the implementation.

The aim of the evaluation was to explore the **applicability and impact of Safeguards ED interventions**.

### Where?



3 EDs within  
2 health services

### Study design



Questionnaire



Focus groups



Observational  
cohort studies

### Timeline



## KEY FINDINGS

### CODE GREY EVENT RATES



Code Grey event rate was **reduced by approximately 30%** in the six months after implementing the Safewards ED interventions

### OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATION/S



For patients brought to the ED by police for mental health assessment (Section 351), **significantly fewer sedative medications were administered** after implementing Safewards ED interventions



For patients treated under the Mental Health Act (2014) in the ED, the **median duration of mechanical restraint was significantly reduced** after implementing Safewards ED interventions (from 1.8 hours to 1.2 hours; difference of 36 minutes)

### STAFF PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE INTERVENTIONS



Staff reported **favourable experiences** using Safewards ED interventions, especially interventions that involved improved **communication skills** and **collaboration**

## CONCLUSION

This is the first project that has evaluated Safewards model within the ED setting. This project demonstrated nine Safewards ED interventions are applicable to the ED setting with **consistent evidence of positive experiences reported by staff** using the interventions. There was evidence the Safewards ED interventions **reduced some coercive practices**.

## FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

There was a **substantial reduction of the use of all three types of coercive interventions** among patients brought to the ED by police for a mental health assessment. However, the change was only **observed at one site**. Furthermore, there was limited evidence of change in the rate of mechanical restraint used in Code Grey events and for vulnerable populations. A larger sample size might be able to detect the true effect of the interventions.

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Safewards Model, please visit <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/safewards>