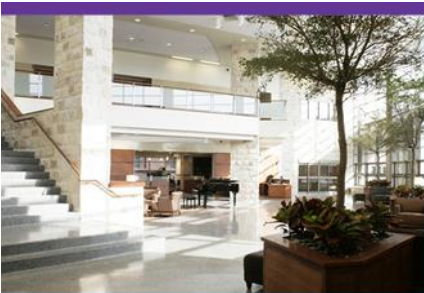




## LESSONS LEARNED



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## Lessons Learned About Behavioral and Mental Health

The following list has been compiled based on research literature, case studies, interviews, and other materials to provide an overview of behavioral and mental health (BMH).

1. Effective designs for BMH settings can improve patients' psychological well-being by creating an environment that makes them feel at home.
2. BMH conditions often co-occur with other medical conditions that require treatment in another care setting, such as a general hospital. With this in mind, design choices throughout *all* healthcare settings must be able to support the needs of BMH patients.
3. Incorporating healing design features can benefit other patients, residents, staff, and visitors in addition to those with BMH concerns. A universal design approach (that is, design that can support people with a wide range of needs) can be cost-effective as well.
4. While there are basic design principles that can work in most BMH settings (and beyond), it's important to remember there's no "one-size-fits-all" solution. Instead, designers should consider the programming and population needs for each situation in order to develop the best design solutions.
5. Safety is typically the number one concern for people with behavioral health diagnoses. While safety is a good place to start, effective designs for BMH populations should also incorporate comfort and beauty.
6. The best designs for BMH units achieve a homelike feel while providing patients and residents with autonomy and control over their environment.
7. Other features to incorporate into BMH designs include privacy, noise control, organization, access to daylight, connections to nature, and opportunities for socializing.
8. Even the best available operational techniques for violence and suicide risk assessment are not reliable predictors of patient outcomes. This makes it essential for designers to incorporate design choices that reduce the risk of harm to patients and staff.

*The Behavioral & Mental Health toolbox is made available through a partnership with:*

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9. When selecting behavioral health furniture, designers should consider the safety of traditional materials. For instance, laminate becomes sharp if cracked; vinyl can shred and be used as a noose. Selecting higher-density urethane and more heavily woven textiles can minimize these dangers. Weighting furniture can also help prevent items from being used as a weapon.
10. The key to achieving a safe and supportive BMH environment is to bring together an interdisciplinary team of stakeholders (such as the interior designer, architect, contractor, and fabric designer) to create designs that address safety concerns while maintaining an inviting look and feel.