

My Brockville Mental Health Centre Experience

Mon expérience au Centre de santé mentale de Brockville

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My stay at the hospital here in Brockville, has been a lengthy one. I was at the Royal Ottawa Hospital prior to this. When first coming in to the system, I thought it was going to be a short stay. Oh, how I was wrong. It's been since 2009. It's now 2026. That's a whopping seventeen years of being involved of the forensic system. Good thing, as of right now is that I won't be in the hospital that much longer this time around. I say this because I've been out of the hospital quite a few times. This last time just in January. Where I returned in January only six days after being released. On several other occasions I was released to a couple different group homes and a few residential drug treatment centres. All of those discharges were short lived I didn't last to long. No more than a couple months. There were even a few times where I was recharged and ended up back in jail. In which case I was readmitted to the hospital right after my sentence was up. Ergo, I'm a dual status offender meaning I am part of the judicial system and the forensic system. Now to talk about how it is in the forensic system as an inpatient.

Well, it's really not all that bad considering most people in society probably think it's terrible. At time it can be tough but I'm not going to talk about that here. I'm mostly going to talk about how my experience was mainly a good one. Okay, so I get three square meals a day, a couple of snacks a day, and then there's take-out night every Wednesday on the unit I'm currently on. I'll get more into the units later on. Eventually you get privileges and have the opportunity to buy your own groceries. Unfortunately, the unit I'm on doesn't allow you to cook in the kitchen, but on the third floor you can. But

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where I am on the fourth floor B-4 North I'm allowed to get snack items. For example, chips, candy, chocolate bars, pop, instant coffee, etc.

Then there's other privileges. For example, indirect grounds and indirect Community. With indirect grounds privileges I can go on the hospital grounds and smoke cigarettes and/or vape if I choose to do so. I smoke both cigarettes and vape when my finances permit it. With the indirect community privileges, I can go into the community of Brockville and do various activities. For example, I can shop at retail stores, my favorite is Walmart, I can go to restaurants and fast-food joints to eat, I haven't been yet but I can go to the museum, another one I haven't been to yet, but would like to experience is the Brockville Arts Centre. There's also the Brockville Memorial Civic Centre, which holds different programs from time to time. For example, Jr. A hockey, the Brockville Braves, and there was a time where they had a Comic Con. There are others as well. Another thing I can do with my indirect community privileges is go to the Aquatarium, or if I had my fishing licence, which I intend to get, then I can go fishing, or in the summer the beach. I used to go to the movie theatre but it shut down because not enough people were going. Those are pretty much the privileges you can have here at the FTU, short for Forensic Treatment Unit. Which is another name for the Brockville Mental Health Centre.

While here at the FTU another experience I have is the attending of groups and programming. Most of the groups offered here are related around mental health but there are groups for overcoming drug addiction, stress management, and learning skills. There are other groups that teach you about how to live independently in the community for the eventuality that you will get released into your own apartment or house. The groups offered here at the FTU vary. There is what an addictions group is essentially, where they

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talk about how to get clean. They talk about triggers and urges, what the difference is between them and how to notice them. They tell you how you can ride the wave, meaning work with cravings, and let them come and pass. They tell you about PAWS (post acute withdrawal symptoms). Then there's the CBT group which stands for, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, which is about helping you understand how your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected. This group is the one I like most. Then there's DBT, short for Dialectical Behavior Therapy, it is a structured type of talk therapy (psychotherapy) designed to help people who experience emotions very intensely. Another group offered at the FTU is stress management. This group talks about how to deal with stress. Anywhere from reducing stress to learning how to cope when it arises. I'm fascinated by CBT over the others because it's essentially how to hack your mind. These are the groups offered at the FTU.

Another great thing that the Brockville Mental Health Centre has, that the BMHC's sister hospital, The Royal Ottawa Hospital doesn't have are vocational placements. This gives patients the opportunity to work on site and in the community to help earn a little extra money. The pay isn't that great but its incentive to get people in the habit of working to prepare for the real world. Also giving patients, the opportunity to learn some skills and training. Jobs include things like cleaning the lounge area, cleaning windows, cleaning the hand rails, sweeping and mopping the stairwells. Other jobs include The River Café where you get hands on skills similar to that of a coffee shop, like Tim Hortons for example. Other jobs that are off site in the community are jobs like mowing lawns in the summer, raking leaves in the fall, and shovelling snow in the winter. These jobs pay more than the jobs located in the hospital because there more taxing on the body. Another job

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I'd like to mention is the car wash located on the hospital grounds at a group home, The FITT House. It's car detail by hand with various cleaning products. The last two jobs I want to talk about are move jobs and dump runs. It sounds just as is we move people from apartment or house to another location. And a dump run is dropping off junk and garbage at the dump. That's all for the vocational placements.

The staff here are pretty good. Some of them are nice and respectful and enforce the rules in a positive manner. Others not so good and seem to implement their own rules and aren't entirely consistent with the rules. This makes it hard to know how and when to do certain things and perform certain behaviors. In the time I've been in the hospital I've had nurses make up fabrications about me and chart on it, also giving strange looks or not saying hi. Because that's something someone in the health care system should do. Basically, the nurses, some of them, anyway, seem to tell you, for example you can't say that or you can't do that. One they're violating my right to freedom of speech by saying I can't say certain things. If it's inappropriate then I get it, but if it's not inappropriate then they have no right to tell me I can't say it. This is something that actually happens at the FTU. Two they'll tell me I can't do a certain thing, but what I'm doing is not an actual rule. They're saying it is but it's not in the guidelines. Nurses will also make up fabrications. I've had a nurse report on me and another patient saying that we said that we were going to terminate him. This never happened. I had another nurse say that, she was bending over doing something with the garbage, I said I like you down there can I stare. I'm sure more of this sort of thing happens with other patients.

The rooms here at the FTU are decent. A couple of them are too small while others are way too spacious. Overall, it's a good living experience. There are four units here at

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the FTU occupying two floors. B-4 is one and B-3 is another. There is B-4 South, which is the assessment unit, B4 North, the first rehab unit, B3 South, the second rehab unit, and lastly B3 North, which is something like a discharge unit, but also a rehab unit. The rules do not change much between the units but there are slight differences. Things like take-out night on different nights. B4 North falls on a Wednesday. B3 South is every Thursday. Lastly, B3 North happens every Friday. Another change is on the fourth-floor privileges start at nine a.m., B3 South is at 8:30 a.m., and B3 North start at 7:30 a.m. but then you have to be in for 8:00 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. On the fourth-floor showers end at 5:30 p.m. On the third-floor showers end when the lounge closes 11:00 p.m. on weekdays and 1:00 a.m. on weekends. Another charge is on B3 North you can have your cellphone on the unit and a laptop, which you cannot have on the other units. That is pretty much it for the changes on the different units.

Now for my overall experience in the FTU. I find days go by fairly quick especially on weekdays where I can keep busy between vocational placements and programming. When I am not busy with those in my spare time, I like to go out on privileges and smoke cigarettes and/or vape. I like to walk on the grounds also from time to time. This also gives me a good opportunity to talk with friends from other units as this is the only time I am able to see them and do this. While I am in my room I like to watch movies, watch television series, ear books, and play video games. I also like to play Magic the Gathering, which is a card game, with my friends on the unit. I forgot to mention I am currently on B4 North, the first rehab unit. I can't even count how many times I've been back on this unit.

The food here at the FTU is decent. It does not always have much flavour, spices, or seasoning, but it is good. At times, the portions are not that good but the sizes are

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definitely healthy. The menu is quite diverse so that is another good thing. Once and a while they also change the menu which is nice.

The television here at the FTU has some decent channels. We got our movie channels, sports, if you are into that, I am not, reality shows, music, etc. I watch the television in the lounge from time to time, but I would rather watch television in the solidarity of my room.

I do not really think there is much else I do here at BMHC. I like the groups. They are interesting and I am always learning something new. I just started doing a bit of exercise at the gym. In the past week, I have now gone two or three times. I have just been using the free-weights. Doing things like bicep curls, triceps extensions, lateral raises, and shoulder presses. I want to try to lose some weight. I am at a very unhealthy weight currently. I am over three hundred pounds. At a height of 6'2 ½. That is morbidly overweight. I am also a borderline diabetic, so I am on metformin. Which is prescribed by my nurse practitioner. Apparently, metformin will help reduce the chances of me becoming a full-blown diabetic. Well, I do not have much else to talk about. I just had my birthday day on Wednesday April 29th, today is May 1st.

In terms of spiritual care, here at the FTU it is very limited. An imam comes every Friday. In addition, there is the chaplain. I was a Baptist, but recently I have been thinking of converting to Islam. I used to go to church at the First Baptist Church downtown Brockville when I had community privs, short for privileges, because I lost them. All I can do now is read my Quran and pray. I do not pray as often as I believe I should be, but I am working at getting better at it. The last piece I'm going to write about is whether or not I converted from Christianity to Islam was based on my experience here in the hospital.

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It was not. It was purely by preference. My belief changed. I now believe that the Quran is the real Word of the one true God and Muhammad is his last messenger. I do not believe Jesus is God. There is only one God and that is God.

Another good thing here at the FTU is that I am in the process of getting my high school diploma. I am doing a course that has fifteen lessons that will acquire me my last four credits. Then I will have received my high school diploma. A good thing is I am not obligated to attend the graduation ceremony. I get uncomfortable being in front of large crowds. Well, I am nearing the end of this composition. I guess I can end by saying; overall Brockville Mental Health Centre is a suitable place to be if you go NCR (Not Criminally Responsible) and are able to choose which hospital you go to. I just want to end by saying, if I can give you a piece of advice, while in hospital don't use drugs, don't be violent in any way, and follow most of the rules to the best of your ability. If you do this, your stay will be fairly short and rewarding. Getting you the most from your treatment or rehabilitation. I have been here ten years and others have been here longer. Do not be like us do not ruin your life. Thanks for listening.