



Absent Without Leave

Definitions of Escape and Abscond

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Definitions of Escape, Attempted Escape, Abscond and Failure to Return in Secure Mental Health Services

The following definitions apply to high, medium and low secure mental health services:

Escape

A detained patient escapes from a unit/hospital if he or she unlawfully gains liberty by breaching the secure perimeter that is the outside wall, fence, reception or declared boundary of that unit.

Attempted Escape

A failed or prevented attempt by a patient to breach the secure perimeter that in the nature of the incident demonstrated intent to escape

Abscond

A patient unlawfully gains liberty during escorted leave of absence outside of the perimeter of the originating unit/hospital by breaking away from the custody/supervision of staff.

Failure to Return

A patient fails to return from authorised unescorted leave.

Note: Chapter 22 of the Mental Health Act Code of Practice gives guidance about action to be taken when patients are absent without leave.