

PRESENTER

**Lawna Brotherston**

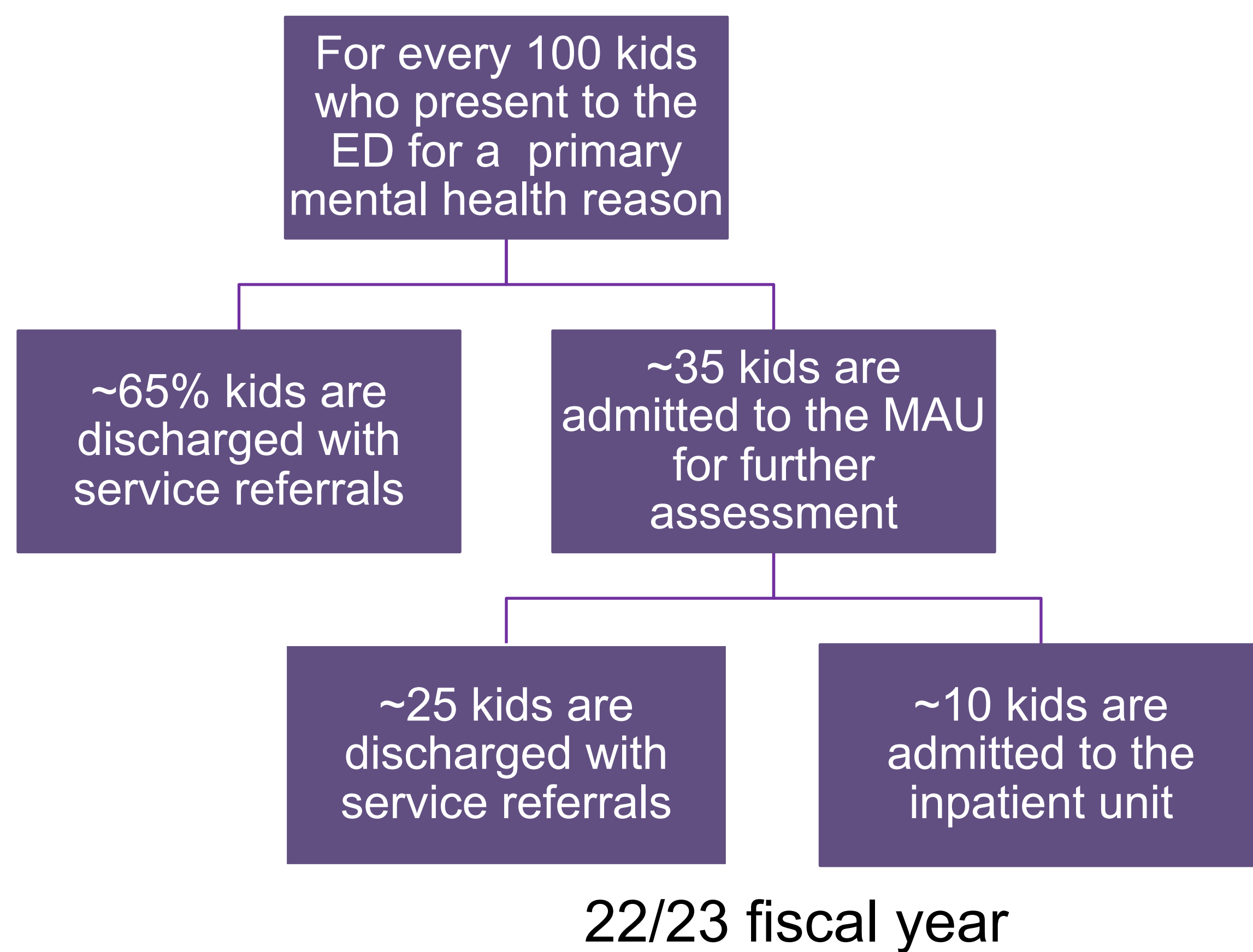
## Background

Pediatric emergency departments are overburdened by high volumes and understaffed by post-pandemic human resource shortages. Presentations to pediatric EDs for mental health presentations have also been increasing, thereby creating a need for innovative ways to meet these demands.

## What we did

In November 2014, McMaster Children's Hospital opened a 6-bed Mental Health Assessment Unit (MAU). The MAU is a locked, self-contained unit housed in the ED for admitted patients. The purpose of this unit is to provide specialized risk assessment and crisis stabilization for children and youth (and their families) experiencing a mental health crisis. The average length of stay in the MAU is 18 to 36 hours.

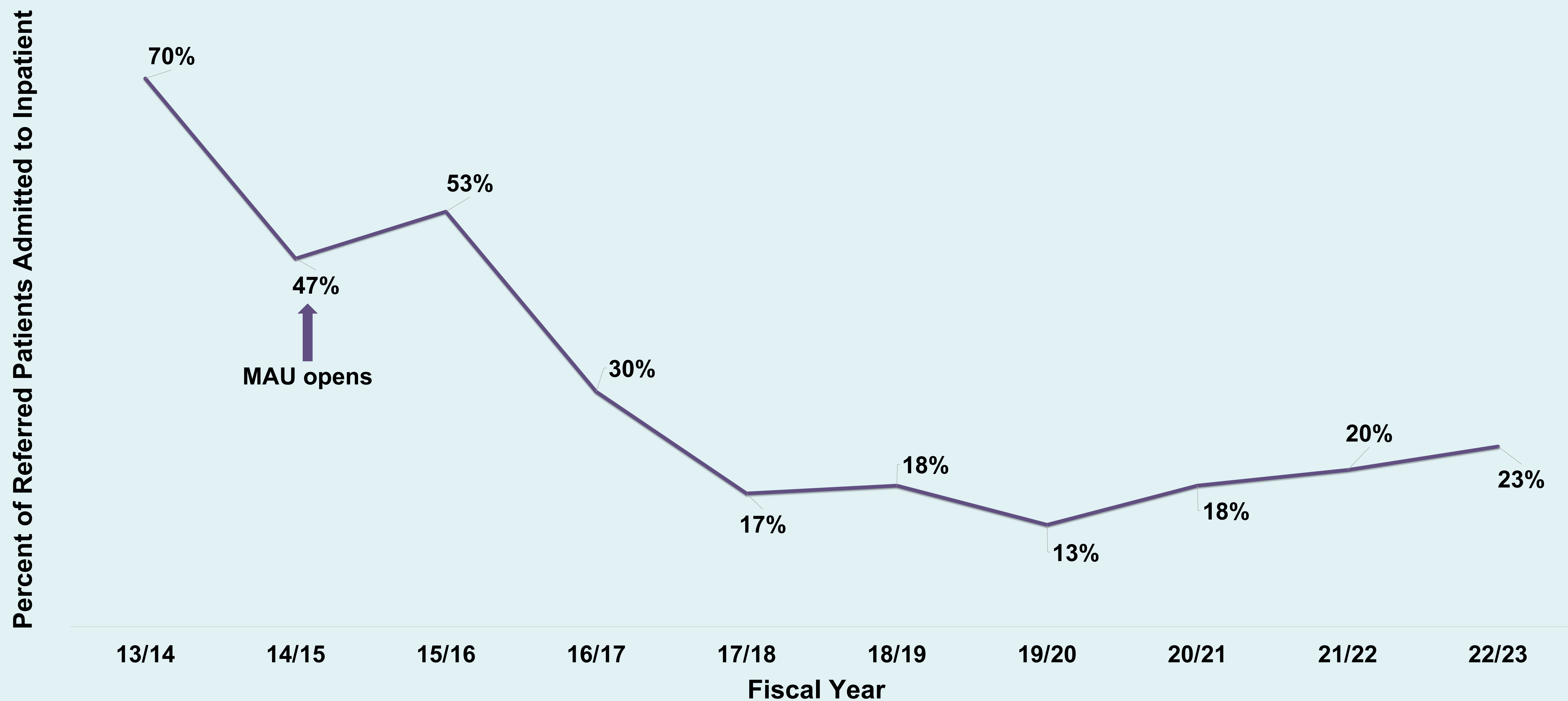
## How it works



The MAU is a novel approach for pediatric crisis management in acute mental health care. Patients are admitted to the MAU, which allows time for further risk assessment and for the crisis to stabilize. Without the pressure to urgently determine disposition, the number of admissions to the inpatient unit dramatically reduced, thereby reserving this critical service for those most acutely in need as well as preventing unnecessary and potentially iatrogenic admissions. As a result of this less intrusive approach, there is improved flow through acute care and a decrease on ED resources and wait times, thus reducing the burden on an already overwhelmed healthcare system.



# How the creation of a separate mental health assessment unit in a pediatric emergency department reduced ED wait times and inpatient admission rates



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