PATIENT RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Definition
Under direction, and in accordance with statutory, regulatory and established guidelines and procedures, ensures the observance of the rights of the mentally ill.

Distinguishing Characteristics
The Patient Rights Advocate is a single position classification. Incumbents are expected to exercise good judgment and work with minimal supervision. The Patient Rights Advocate is required to provide individual and system advocacy for mental health consumers. It is distinguished from the Supervising Patient Rights Advocate by the latter’s responsibility for supervising staff within the Patient Rights Unit.

Essential Functions
- Responds to requests for assistance; determines need for advocacy services; and provides information and referral to individuals and their families who do not qualify for services.
- Investigates allegations of patient rights violations; documents findings; maintains records to ensure timely response and progress to complaints; and keeps supervisor informed of all ongoing open cases.
- Monitors compliance to laws, rules and regulations as it pertains to patient rights at mental health facilities; and monitors the use of electro-convulsive shock treatment (ECT) in Kern County.
- Assists other professional staff in interviewing mental health consumers and/or their families.
- Educates mental health consumers and family members on patient rights to encourage participation in treatment planning.
- Organizes and conducts training activities concerning patient rights; assists with the development of educational materials for community groups; mental health consumers, family members and staff.
- Handles the more complex and sensitive hearings, grievances and Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) processes.
- Collects and analyzes data on patient rights violations and prepares appropriate reports required by statute and Medi-Cal regulations.
- Prepares case history information; maintains case records in accordance with established guidelines and procedures.
- Assists in training Patient Rights Advocate staff.
- Stays abreast of all laws, rules and regulations concerning patient rights.
Essential Functions Continued:
- Writes correspondence and reports.
- Utilizes a computer and various software programs.

Other Functions
- Performs other job-related duties as required.

Employment Standards
Completion of a Bachelor’s Degree from an accredited college or university in Psychology, Sociology, Social Work or a related field AND four (4) years full-time paid experience working in a mental health or social service setting providing mental health services OR Master’s Degree from an accredited college or university in Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Sociology or related field AND two (2) years full-time paid experience working in a mental health or social service setting providing mental health services OR Juris Doctorate degree from an accredited school of law AND one (1) year of full-time paid experience in the field of Public Interest Law. Said experience must include the knowledge, skills and ability to resolve conflicts, handle grievances and represent clients in hearings.

Up to two (2) years of experience can be substituted for education on a year for year basis.

Dependent upon assignment, applicants maybe required to pass an extensive background investigation and be fingerprinted. Disqualification for felony, misdemeanor, and traffic offenses will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

A valid California Class “C” Driver’s License is required at the time of appointment.

Knowledge of: grievances and hearings as it relates to patients rights in public and private mental health facilities; principles and practices of conducting investigations; principles and methods of case management as it relates to the provision of mental health services; principles and techniques of interviewing; laws, rules and regulations governing patient rights in public and private mental health facilities; methods and techniques of conflict resolution; community resources available for psychiatric treatment; entitlements provided for recipients of mental health services; public relations; training techniques; and record keeping.

Ability to: understand and apply laws, rules and regulations concerning patient rights; represent mental health consumers and present evidence utilizing court room techniques in court hearing; interact with and interview mental health consumers and their families; conduct investigations; document complaints and follow-up on the complaints resolve conflicts; train staff and the public; read, understand and record medical information; prepare and maintain case files; make presentations; communicate clearly and concisely, orally and in writing; prepare correspondence and reports; follow oral and written instructions; establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff, other County departments, public and private agencies; and utilize a computer to input, access and retrieve information.

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