

ADVOCATE I

This is professional advocacy work for residents in facilities for the mentally retarded or for patients in state institutions to assure that patient rights are observed and quality care is provided. Employees provide monitoring and consultative services to staff and management to inform them about legislation and policies governing patients' rights. Work includes conducting inquiries or investigations of cases of neglect, abuse, and exploitation of residents in response to allegations or complaints from patients/residents, staff, or families. Findings and recommendations are discussed with unit management for negotiation of proper resolution or with facility/division management as necessary. Employees are assigned to monitor specific residential divisions/units or service programs of the facility/institution.

I. DIFFICULTY OF WORK:

Variety and Scope - Teaches staff and patients/residents about patients' rights; monitors patients'/residents' dress for safety and health reasons, treatment schedule, living quarters; investigates allegations of abuse or neglect; recommends improvements in treatment procedures, programs, renovations, staffing or facility/institutional policies.

Intricacy - Ensures that procedures and treatment plans for patients are followed; interprets statutes and policies; recommends and negotiates improvements.

Subject Matter Complexity - Work requires considerable understanding of legislation dealing with patients' rights, policies on restraint and seclusion, and therapeutic intervention; requires considerable skill in interviewing and negotiating for appropriate improvements.

Guidelines - Include N. C. Patients' Rights Laws, Intermediate Care Facility and/or JCAH regulations, N. C. Mental Health/Mental Retardation Laws, State Personnel policies on disciplinary actions, division and facility policies, professional research, and consultation with peers in other agencies.

II. RESPONSIBILITY:

Nature of Instructions - Conducts daily work through responding to referrals and complaints independently; lead advocate and Human Rights Committee assigns projects infrequently.

Nature of Review - Work receives general administrative review by lead advocate or facility director on a periodic basis and ongoing technical review as judged by the success of the improvements or actions recommended.

Scope of Decisions - Work decisions directly impact upon patients/ residents, staff, and supervisors of assigned units.

Consequence of Decisions - Ranges from minor changes in patients'/ residents' schedules to major modifications in treatment programs to disciplinary actions against staff.

III. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS:

Scope of Contacts - Include retarded residents/emotionally disturbed patients, families and guardians, paraprofessional and professional staffs, unit and facility/institution management, division consultants, concerned citizens, and the news media.

Nature and Purpose - To inform of patients' rights, interpret policies and laws, investigate allegations of neglect or abuse, and recommend and negotiate necessary improvements.

IV. OTHER WORK DEMANDS:

Hazards - On occasion patient/resident could be disruptive but other staff available.

Work Conditions - Stressful situations are typical due to resistance and resentment since role is viewed as threat to some staff and managers; physical and environmental elements vary widely depending upon nature of unit, but will usually be mildly disagreeable.

V. JOB REQUIREMENTS:

Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities - Considerable knowledge of N. C. Patients' Rights Laws, Intermediate Care Facility regulations, N. C. Mental Health Laws, State Personnel policies on disciplinary actions, division and facility policies; considerable skill in interviewing and negotiating independently; ability to investigate allegations or complaints, analyze findings and recommend feasible solutions; ability to analyze data gathered, compile report on findings, and present to treatment team, management, or interpret situation to news media; ability to gain the confidence of patients and to work effectively with them, and to maintain effective working relationships with unit supervisors and staff.

Minimum Training and Experience - Graduation from a four-year college with a major in a human service-related field and three years of experience in providing diagnostic and treatment or advocacy service for the developmentally disabled or mentally ill as required for the particular job; or graduation from a four-year college with a major in a human services-related field and four years of human services experience (e.g. child welfare) providing skills in investigating abuse and neglect, interviewing techniques, and similar functions; or a master's degree and two years of the above experience; or an equivalent combination of training and experience.

Minimum Training and Training Experience for Trainee Appointment - Graduation from a four-year college with a major in a human service-related field.

Administering the Class - Applicants possessing a law degree and one year of experience in an advocacy or hearing officer role, or in working with laws affecting the handicapped, or as a practicing attorney may be hired at the entry rate for the class.