



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPORT OF FINDINGS

GRAND PRAIRIE SERVICES— 08-040-9024

HUMAN RIGHTS AUTHORITY— South Suburban Region

[Case Summary— The Authority did not substantiate the complaint as presented; the public record on this case is recorded below. The provider requested that its response not be included as part of the public record.]

INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Authority (HRA) opened an investigation regarding Grand Prairie Services after receiving a complaint of possible rights violations. The complaint alleged that the agency failed to return a recipient's personal property upon discharge. If substantiated, this allegation would violate the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (the Code) (405 ILCS 5/2-104 [c]).

Grand Prairie Services is a community mental health agency that provides comprehensive services to children, adolescents and adults in Southern Cook, Will, Grundy, Kankakee and Livingston Counties. These services include, but are not limited to, medication, counseling, housing, emergency psychiatric services, two developmental training programs, case management and pre-screening for state-operated facilities. Grand Prairie Services has seven sites, and the agency's healthcare network provided services to about 5,000 recipients in 2007.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the complaint, the Vice President of Corporate Compliance, the Director and the Assistant Director of Residential Services, and the Residential Supervisor were interviewed. The complaint was discussed with the recipient and his new social worker by telephone. The recipient's record was reviewed with written consent. The agency's grievance policy and client rights statement were also reviewed.

The adult recipient maintains his legal rights.

COMPLAINT STATEMENT

The complaint initially stated that the recipient's property which included clothing, shoes, legal documents (i.e. birth certificate) and some miscellaneous items were not returned upon his discharge from the agency. The complaint was later clarified that the recipient left his personal items at the agency and calls from his new social worker were unsuccessful in getting the individual's belongings returned.

FINDINGS

According to the recipient's record, he was conditionally placed in Grand Prairie Services' 24-hour supervised residential program on January 8th, 2008. He was transferred to the agency for psychiatric, substance abuse and vocational services as a condition of his release from an inpatient forensic treatment facility. An inventory form completed during the intake process indicated that the recipient had only clothing items and shoes. There were no additional items recorded on the form.

An incident report written on April 4th, 2008 revealed that the recipient did not return to his residential program as scheduled. According to the report, the recipient said that he was going to a nearby store but never returned. The agency filed a missing person's report with the local police department two days later, and the proper authorities were notified. The recipient reportedly was still at large when he was discharged from the agency on April 15th, 2008.

Grand Prairie Services first responded to the complaint in a letter dated July 1st, 2008 stating that the recipient had been remanded back to the referring forensic treatment facility. According to the letter, the forensic facility had agreed to pick up the individual's personal items, and this was done on June 10th, 2008. A corresponding progress note documented that the recipient's clothing, books and mail had been picked up by a staff member from the facility. However, the recipient informed the HRA that a \$30.00 Compact Disc Player (CD player), a \$20.00 headphone and his \$25.00 hair clippers were not returned. These items were reportedly purchased after his admission to the residential program. The recipient also alleged that he was not informed about updating his inventory list with new purchases.

When the complaint was discussed with Grand Prairie Services' staff members, the HRA was informed that the residential home in question consists of 16 beds and that recipients share rooms. Their bedrooms are not locked when they are away from the home. They do not have locked storage space for their personal belongings, but they can purchase footlockers with keys. The investigation team was informed that some recipients have footlockers at other homes managed by the agency. According to the Residential Supervisor, she meets with the recipients weekly in a group. They sometimes complain about money being missing but rarely mention other personal property. The Director of Residential Services added that money can be given to the staff for safekeeping, and she meets with the recipients monthly.

The Residential Supervisor said that she personally packed up the recipient's belongings once it was determined that he would not be returning to the agency. She reported that recipients' property is stored in a shed outside of the home until picked up. The key is kept in a desk in the staff office. On questioning, the staff person was not able to give the exact date when the recipient's items were removed from his room and secured. The record also lacked documentation regarding this issue. The Director of Residential Services said that property is usually packed up three or four days after a recipient fails to return to his/her assigned home. She said that staff will be directed to include the date when property is packed up in recipients' records. The staff person also said property is reviewed with recipients when their discharge is planned.

The record lacked evidence concerning an agreement between the agency and the forensic facility regarding the recipient's belongings except for the July 1st, 2008 letter. However, the recipient's new social worker confirmed that arrangements were made to pick up the individual's property when another recipient was transferred to the agency. According to the social worker, the facility's driver was given a list of the recipient's items to be retrieved from the agency. But, the Residential Supervisor said that she never saw the property list reportedly composed by the recipient or the alleged missing CD player or headphone.

Grand Prairie Services' residential program does not have a policy that addresses recipients' personal property. According to the Vice President of Corporate Compliance, the agency is not responsible for lost or stolen property and considered this as a life event. The investigation team was informed that a police report would be made if items are stolen from a recipient's footlocker. Also, the recipient whose property was allegedly missing did not file a written grievance with the agency.

CONCLUSION

According to the Illinois Administrative Code (59 Ill. Admin. Code 132.142 [d] [5]) and the agency's client rights statement #16, recipients have the right to present grievances up to and including the provider's executive director or comparable position.

Section 5/2-104 (c) of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code states that when a recipient is discharged from the mental health or developmental disabilities facility, all of his lawful personal property which is in the custody of the facility shall be returned to him.

According to the record, the recipient never returned to his residential program after leaving on April 4th, 2008, and he was discharged eleven days later. It was unclear when the recipient's items were packed up and secured by the agency. The Director of Residential Services said that this probably was done three or four days after he failed to return to the home. The recipient's social worker at the forensic facility said that arrangements were made to pick up the individual's belongings when another recipient was transferred to the agency. Documentation indicated that the transfer occurred on June 10th, 2008, and the recipient confirmed that all of his belongings were returned except for a CD player, a headphone and hair clippers. These items were not listed on his inventory sheet and disputed by the agency.

Based on the lack of evidence, the Authority cannot substantiate that the agency failed to return the recipient's personal property that he allegedly left at the agency. Although the agency reportedly is not liable for lost or stolen property, the HRA is concerned because the service provider lacks clear procedures for securing recipient's property in its custody during hospitalizations or unplanned discharges.

The Authority finds no violations of the recipient's rights concerning the above statutes or the agency's client right statement regarding grievances.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Grand Prairie Services should consider developing a policy regarding the safekeeping of recipients' property that is in the facility's custody.
2. Include the dates when property is packed up in recipients' records.
3. For assurance, re-itemize recipient properties when they are packed or stored.
4. Update documentation as new items are purchased.