



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
HRA #08-100-9032
West Chicago Terrace

Case Summary: It was concluded that on one occasion, incoming mail was inadvertently sent out with the outgoing mail; the allegation was substantiated. The HRA's public record on this case is recorded below.

In June 2008, the North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority opened an investigation of possible rights violations within West Chicago Terrace. The complaint accepted for investigation was that a resident was not receiving her mail in a timely manner. Residents receiving services at West Chicago Terrace are protected by the Nursing Home Care Act (210 ILCS 45/100 et seq.).

West Chicago Terrace is a 120-bed, for-profit Intermediate Care facility located in West Chicago, Illinois.

Methods of Investigation

The HRA conducted an on-site visit in June 2008. While at West Chicago Terrace, the HRA discussed the allegation with the facility's Administrator, the resident who was not receiving her mail in a timely manner and the President of the Resident Council.

Findings

The Administrator explained that she personally sorts the mail that is received daily. After the sort, she keeps all business mail and all resident mail is given to the Activity Staff personnel. The Activity staff distributes the mail once per day. Should the resident not be available when the mail is being passed, it was placed at the receptionist area for distribution. The receptionist's area is where the out-going mail is picked-up by a postal service employee.

However, the Administrator explained that this process has been modified because the resident's (identified in this complaint) brother contacted her saying that he had sent a money order and it had not yet been cashed. Upon investigation, the Administrator found that the correspondence from the brother had been sent to the facility and because the resident was not available at the time of the mail-call, the correspondence was placed at the receptionist's area. The correspondence was inadvertently sent with the out-going mail and it was subsequently returned to the facility. The procedure has now been modified so that when a resident is not available to receive mail, the mail is given to the Administrator for distribution.

Upon discussing the matter with the resident, she stated that she had that one incident with the mail and that it is no longer a problem. The Resident Council President stated that he has had

complaints of mail tampering and mail being passed out late - he did not elaborate further but did say that issues raised during resident council meetings are rarely addressed by staff members.

Both the Administrator and President of the Council stated that U.S. Postal Service does not deliver the mail on Saturdays. The HRA contacted the post office and was advised that the reason the mail is not delivered on Saturday is because no one is there to accept the mail. The Administrator was advised of this, and she stated that the mail is delivered to her and that she likes it that way so that she can keep track of the mail. She did say that she would talk to the residents to see if they wanted the mail delivered on Saturday.

Conclusion

Pursuant to the Nursing Home Care Act, Section 2-108, "Every resident shall be permitted unimpeded, private and uncensored communication of his choice by mail, public telephone or visitation. The administrator shall ensure that correspondence is conveniently received and mailed, and that telephones are reasonably accessible."

It is concluded that on one occasion, incoming mail was inadvertently sent out with the outgoing mail; the allegation is substantiated. A system is now in place to ensure that this does not happen in the future thus no recommendations are made.

The HRA however, must comment on the Saturday mail situation. We believe that provisions should be made so that mail can be accepted on Saturday. And, we suggest that the Administrator address the issue that matters presented at the Resident Council meetings are not addressed by staff members.