



---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

---

Egyptian Regional Human Rights Authority  
Report of Findings  
09-110-9014  
Chester Mental Health Center  
February 10, 2008

The Egyptian Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation concerning an alleged rights violation at Chester Mental Health Center, a state-operated mental health facility located in Chester, Illinois. The facility, which provides services to approximately 300 male residents, is the most restrictive mental health facility in the state. The specific allegation is as follows:

Chester Mental Health Center has instituted a wristband bar code system that is restrictive and intrusive to recipients.

Statutes

If substantiated, the allegation would be a violation of the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (Code) (405 ILCS 5/2-102).

Section 5/2-102 of the Code states, "A recipient of services shall be provided with adequate and humane care and services in the least restrictive environment, pursuant to an individual services plan."

Complaint Information

The HRA received a written complaint regarding a proposed procedure that mandates recipients at the facility to wear a bar-coded wrist band at all times. According to the complaint, staff members will scan every recipient at frequent intervals during the day and at night. It is also alleged that the system is an infringement on recipients' rights to privacy, and is "a step closer to impersonalization and big brotherism, as well as making more useless paperwork for staff."

Investigation Information

To investigate the allegation, the HRA Investigation Team, consisting of three members and the HRA Coordinator (Coordinator), conducted a site visit at the facility. During the visit, the Team spoke with three recipients and the Chairman (Chairman) of the facility's Human Rights Committee regarding the allegation.

## Interviews:

### A...Recipients:

When the Team spoke with Recipient A, he stated that having to be hospitalized in the most restrictive mental health hospital in the state is impersonal enough without encountering another infringement of rights associated with the bar code system. He stated that the system is an intrusion on the right to privacy and religious beliefs. He informed the Team that his main objection centers on his religious beliefs that an enforced bar code system is "the mark of the beast referred to in the Bible." He stated that the system is intrusive during day-time activities and sleep during the night.

Recipient B and C informed the Team that they believed that the system is very restrictive. When staff members come into a recipient's room during the night to scan the bracelet, the recipient's sleep is disturbed, and daytime activities are interrupted when staff members are required to scan each recipient's bracelet.

### B...Chairperson

According to the Chairman, each recipient has a wrist band on his arm and the staff member has an ID badge. The staff member can scan his/her ID badge and then scan the bracelet, enabling the facility to know when the recipient was last seen and who saw the recipient. Scanning is scheduled at 30 minute intervals.

The Chairman informed the Team that the system is also being used to prevent medication errors. He stated that each recipient's medication is recorded in the computer and all medications have bar codes. When a facility nurse administers medication, the nurse's ID badge and each medication is scanned. If the wrong medication is scanned, the nurse will be alerted to the mistake before the medication is administered.

He stated that the procedure was started on Unit A; however, some problems were encountered. He stated that instead of scanning each recipient's bracelet during the night, a bar code was affixed to the recipient's bedroom door enabling the staff member to scan the code while looking into the recipient's room. He stated that the facility plans to implement the procedure on Unit C, as well as Unit A before there is facility-wide implementation.

The Chairman stated that the bar code system is being implemented in all state-operated mental health facilities rather than being specific to Chester Mental Health Center.

## Summary

According to the complaint, an intrusive wristband bar code system has been implemented at the facility. Recipients who were interviewed by the Team expressed concern that the system was an invasion of their privacy, disturbed their sleeping, and interfered with activities. According to the Chairman, the procedure has not been implemented facility wide due

to some problems that had been encountered. However, the procedure had commenced on one unit and would soon be initiated on another unit.

### Conclusion

Section 5/2-102 of the Code states that a recipient shall be provided with adequate and humane care and services in the least restrictive environment, pursuant to an individual services plan. The use of the barcode monitoring system for all recipients without clinically determining that it is necessary fails to meet the requirement in the statute.

The Authority recognizes that the facility has an obligation to monitor recipients in its care and to ensure their well-being and safety. Additionally, the Authority sees the benefit of using the scanning system to monitor medication administration to prevent errors. However, the system has the potential for disrupting the recipients' sleep as well as interfering with activities, such as eating a meal, reading a book, speaking with a therapist, meeting with a doctor, and attending group activities. The loss of dignity of such an action that occurs in great frequency could be considered inhumane.

In the event that a recipient's medical or psychiatric condition warrants additional, more intrusive observation, that should be documented and the intrusion should be conducted as a part of the recipient's individual services plan.

The Authority has determined that the use of the bar code scanning system violates the Code, unless it is deemed necessary by the treatment team and incorporated in a recipient's individual services plan or used as a method to ensure that medication is safely administered. Therefore, the allegation is substantiated.

### Recommendation:

Whenever a recipient has a physical or psychiatric condition that warrants additional, more intrusive monitoring, as in the scanning system, that condition should be documented, reviewed by the treatment team and the procedure incorporated in the recipient's treatment plan.