



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
Alexian Brothers Medical Center
HRA #11-100-9014

The North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation of alleged rights violations at Alexian Brothers Medical Center. In May 2011, the HRA notified Alexian Brothers Medical Center of its intent to conduct an investigation, pursuant to the Guardianship and Advocacy Act (20 ILCS 3955). The complaint investigated was that a patient in the emergency department was denied access to a telephone. Substantiated findings would violate rights protected under the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5).

The HRA conducted an on-site visit in June 2011. While at the hospital, the HRA interviewed a representative from risk management and emergency department administrators. The HRA was unsuccessful in its attempts to obtain consent that would allow patient record review.

Background

Alexian Brothers Medical Center is a 320-bed community hospital located in Elk Grove Village. The hospital has more than 750 physicians on the medical staff representing over 60 medical and surgical specialties. The hospital contracts with a Hospitalist program. Hospitalists are physicians trained in general internal medicine and/or family medicine that devote their practice to the care of hospitalized patients. The hospital's emergency care department offers behavioral health assessments for psychiatric crisis intervention.

Investigative Findings

Hospital personnel stated that access to the telephone is not restricted to persons with mental illness, unless the person is physically or verbally abusive during the use of the telephone. They explained that they have a telephone in each room except for one treatment room. It was further stated that since most of the persons now have their own cellular phones, many simply use their own telephones. There are no restrictions on the use of cellular telephones because the telephones do not interfere with the medical equipment.

Hospital personnel relayed that there is not a specific policy that addresses telephone communication since telephones are provided in all treatment areas, with the exception of the one procedure area.

The HRA toured the emergency department; the first room observed was a treatment room that is used to take an electrocardiogram if the person is complaining of chest pain; there is no telephone in this room. The other rooms had a telephone either on the wall or on a counter. A wall

pay telephone was observed that is still available. It was offered that in the past year the hospital received one complaint regarding the denial of telephone communication. Upon an internal investigation it was discovered that the patient had made 37 telephone calls.

Investigative Conclusion

Section 5/2-103 of the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code states that "a recipient who resides in a mental health or developmental disabilities facility shall be permitted unimpeded, private, and uncensored communication with persons of his choice by mail, telephone and visitation. The facility director shall ensure that correspondence can be conveniently received and mailed, that telephones are reasonably accessible... Unimpeded, private and uncensored communication by mail, telephone, and visitation may be reasonably restricted by the facility director only in order to protect the recipient or others from harm, harassment or intimidation, provided that notice of such restriction shall be given to all recipients upon admission."

The HRA concludes that within the ED environment it observed, patient rights to telephone access are not violated; the allegation is unsubstantiated.