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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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HUMAN RIGHTS AUTHORITY - NORTHWEST REGION

REPORT 12-080-9006  
H. DOUGLAS SINGER MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

Case Summary: the HRA did not find that religious services were not being offered at the facility. Findings are recorded below and a response was not required.

INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Authority opened an investigation of potential rights violations in the services provided to recipients at Singer Mental Health Center. Allegations state that religious services are not being provided when requested. Substantiated findings would violate protections under the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5).

Singer is a state-operated hospital located in Rockford; it has about fifty beds for adult civil and forensics based treatment.

COMPLAINT SUMMARY

According to this complaint there were no religious services of any kind being offered or made available to recipients in the hospital. One man said he asked several staff members to see a clergyman but received no help.

We met with the hospital's quality manager and the same man's case manager to discuss the issues. Relevant sections of a recipient's file were reviewed with authorization.

FINDINGS

We were told that the facility had no specific organized religious service or worship set up for weekends per se. Instead, a man from the Salvation Army comes every Wednesday morning to provide reflection, music and prayer as well as personal time if requested. The program, called Meditation, lasts two hours and is available to all recipients on all three units.

All recipients are made aware of the option and make their own decisions on whether to attend; the group activity schedule shows the program listed every Wednesday morning.

If any recipient insisted on a visit with a personal clergy, someone from the community or someone of the recipient's choice can be contacted and asked to visit him or her at the facility, which is usually done without problem.

Such was to be the case with the recipient who allegedly asked for help in reaching his clergy but was left hanging. His case manager explained that indeed, the recipient did mention about seeing a clergyman one day. To promote some initiative and responsibility, he said he would provide him with several numbers from the local area but the recipient wanted to contact his own clergy in his hometown, which he knew how to do. Both agreed that the recipient would proceed in doing that. The recipient reported that he had made the contact and someone was coming to see him; the case manager thought the matter was done and never heard anything from the recipient on the subject again. According to the documentation, no one ultimately visited him. That all occurred on May 17 as supported in progress notes from the record, before the HRA received this complaint on May 22.

There are no other entries concerning the issue in the record, as far as we can tell.

## CONCLUSION

Singer has a faith-based program listed on a group activity schedule for all recipients to choose from. Under the Mental Health Code, all recipients *shall be provided* with adequate and humane care and services and recipients shall have the right to choose well-recognized religious denomination services. (405 ILCS 5/2-102 a, b).

The staff we spoke with stated that anyone can request to see a clergy of a particular faith and someone would be contacted for them, and, they have the option of attending the Meditation program, which is of more general faith. In this case a recipient wanted to see his own clergy from home, took the initiative to reach him, which showed some therapeutic initiative as preferred by the case manager, and even said the clergy was coming to see him. So the manager thought it was a done deal and left it alone never hearing from the recipient again until the HRA was involved. We believe the recipient clearly manipulated the situation, and since the request to see clergy was first made on the 17<sup>th</sup> and the case manager offered his help to make it happen, we find no rights violation and the complaint is not substantiated.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Since the facility is ultimately charged with *providing* care and services, be sure there is follow up whenever recipients are given responsibility for completing something.
2. Make sure that recipients understand that the Meditation program is based on general faith and not specific religions (Catholic, Lutheran, etc.).

3. Make sure that all recipients are aware that they can ask to reach any clergy from the community if they so choose.