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North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority  
Report of Findings  
HRA #13-100-9017  
Linden Oaks at Edward

**Introduction**

In June 2013, the North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) opened this investigation regarding Linden Oaks at Edward. A complaint was received that alleged that the hospital has a rule that consumers in the adolescent program cannot discuss religious convictions. The rights of consumers are protected by the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5/2-100).

According to the Linden Oaks at Edward web-site, programs help adolescents and adults rediscover themselves by developing new ways of communicating and coping that restore and maintain overall balance. In addition, the hospital also provides care for older adults who have unique medical and psychological needs. There are different options, including inpatient, intensive outpatient, and outpatient treatment programs, as well as individual, family, and group therapy.

**Methodology**

To pursue this investigation, the HRA reviewed the hospital's Clergy Services policy. Also reviewed was the program's admission packet that includes information regarding clergy services. The HRA conducted a site visit in August 2013, at which time the allegation was discussed with the program's Director, the Director of Nursing and the hospital's Executive Director.

**Findings**

The hospital denies that it has a rule that prohibits individuals in the adolescent program the ability to discuss religious convictions. The hospital stated that all consumers receiving services at the hospital (adolescent as well as adult) have the ability to have clergy services available 24-hours a day. Written documentation given to the consumer at the time of admission indicates that the clergy may visit a patient at any time during the day and that this could be clergy requested from the hospital or the consumer's own clergy.

It was offered that in addition to the 24-hour clergy access, the adolescent programming has many opportunities for spirituality. The Adolescent Inpatient daily schedule reviewed by the HRA showed that each day includes an opportunity for journaling and emotional reflection. On Sunday, time is allotted in the programming schedule that is devoted to spirituality, which includes the ability to discuss religious convictions. Group Programming also addresses Values and Spirituality in Mindfulness and Acceptance Workshops, each of which allows the consumer to express his or her religious feelings and convictions.

It was also offered that from time to time, consumers are reminded that there are appropriate and inappropriate opportunities to discuss their religious convictions in the treatment setting. For example, if a consumer is talking only about a particular religious viewpoint and is not focusing on the topic or subject at hand, the consumer may be redirected and asked to not discuss the religious convictions at that time. Similarly, if a consumer is expressing extreme points of view and making others uncomfortable, that consumer might be asked to refrain from discussing that topic. It was stressed that each situation is considered on an individual basis, but there is no rule saying that religious topics are off-limits.

When asked if the program had any consumers that needed redirection due to extreme religious convictions, it was stated that in the past few months they have had a few consumers that required redirection. One consumer in particular needed redirection because he had gone into other consumers' bedrooms to discuss his convictions and he was making the milieu uncomfortable with his fervor. It was stated that when a consumer needs structured redirection, the treatment team is notified so that the matter can be addressed.

The hospital's Clergy Services policy states that it is the policy of Linden Oaks to have clergy services available 24 hours a day. The patient can contact a Clergy Person of their choice or go through the Pastoral Care Department at Edward Hospital.

### **Conclusion**

Pursuant to the Illinois Mental Health Code, Section 2-100 (a) "No recipient of services shall be deprived of any rights, benefits, or privileges guaranteed by law, the Constitution of the State of Illinois, or the constitution of the United States solely on account of the receipt of such services. (b) A person with a known or suspected mental illness or developmental disability shall not be denied mental health or developmental services because of age, sex, race, religious belief, ethnic origin, marital status, physical or mental disability or criminal record unrelated to present dangerousness."

It is concluded that the hospital does not have a rule that consumers in the adolescent program cannot discuss religious convictions; the allegation is unsubstantiated.