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North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority  
Report of Findings  
HRA #14-100-9011  
Linden Oaks at Edward

**Introduction**

In October 2013, the North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) opened this investigation regarding Linden Oaks at Edward. A complaint was received that alleged that a consumer was not treated with kindness or understanding during the intake/admission process and she did not feel safe after she was separated from the support of her spouse. The rights of consumers are protected by the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5/2-102).

According to the Linden Oaks at Edward web-site, the mental health 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 a consumer's clinical record, with written consent. The HRA conducted a site visit in December 2013, at which time the allegation was discussed with the hospital's Risk Manager, an Intake Worker and the hospital's Educational Director.

**Findings**

The consumer stated that she went to the hospital as she needed some mental health services; she was accompanied by her husband. She stated that they were directed to go through a locked door and they entered a room with lockers and some chairs. Upon entering the room, the consumer's husband was made to leave and that left the consumer to fend for herself in a strange place, under duress and not knowing what would happen next. The consumer stated that a female staff member told her to sit down but the consumer stated that she was too upset to sit; the staff member did not offer her name. The consumer stated that she moved further into a corner of the room and that the woman never came over to say anything kind to her or to make her feel comfortable or safe. The consumer stated that she tried to go out the locked door and was grabbed by four men and placed on a gurney and then into restraints. The consumer reported that she was then sent to the emergency department at a nearby hospital.

According to the Patient Assessment Tool document, the consumer presented to the hospital very tearful and agitated; she was unwilling to follow directions to lock her belongings or give her name to Intake personnel. It was documented that the consumer's husband supplied staff members with her name and reported that the consumer had been suicidal for "years" and was

currently suicidal. The husband also reported that the consumer had a breakdown in the morning and voiced suicidal ideations without a plan.

The clinical record contains a Naperville Fire Department report, which stated that they were called to the scene because a patient was uncooperative and combative. It was documented that the consumer was resisting staff members. The report documented that Naperville emergency response personnel used soft restraints to restrain the consumer's limbs to the cot. Hospital personnel told the emergency response team that the consumer was brought in by her husband who stated that the consumer made comments about wanting to harm herself; the consumer then stated that she wanted to leave during the intake interview. When the consumer was advised that she could not leave due to the threat she made, she became uncooperative and combative. The report noted that the consumer was visibly agitated but she was not trying to remove her restraints or fight EMS and that she was transported without incident.

Linden Oaks staff members continued the Intake Assessment at the nearby Emergency Department and documented that the consumer remained agitated and combative and required restraints to keep her from harming herself. The consumer reported that staff members were trying to kill her, and that they were giving her medications just to kill her. The assessment documented that the husband reported that the consumer told him that she was close to killing herself and that she was going to walk to the hospital. The husband brought the consumer to the hospital but the consumer was "so agitated and anxious that she was unable to even begin the assessment and required ambulance transport to E.R. for safety."

At the site visit, hospital personnel explained the intake process, saying that the consumer meets with a licensed resource and referral counselor for a detailed screening. The counselor will give a recommendation for treatment after consulting with a psychiatrist via telephone. Screenings are free of charge and strictly confidential. The first assessment is for safety to ensure that the consumer has not entered the hospital with an item that could harm himself/herself or others. The consumer is then evaluated for the appropriate disposition of inpatient or outpatient services. It was stated that the intake process takes an average of 40 minutes and the process is conducted in a specific area and in specific rooms within the hospital. The first stop is the family waiting room that contains lockers, couches, and televisions. It was stated that the consumer was unable to enter the waiting room; she remained in the hallway. She was described as screaming, restless, garbled speech and she would not tell staff members her name. At this point her husband was taken to a room to be interviewed and he relayed that this was not normal behavior for her and that she was suicidal. Naperville emergency services were then contacted and they applied soft restraints to transport her to a nearby hospital.

It was explained that each employee is expected to care for and treat each consumer with respect and dignity. The hospital has written instructions for its employees, which include items such as: "introducing myself with a smile, assure patient privacy and safety, express sensitivity to consumer and family needs, ongoing and clear communication between patient care team and patient, helping consumer become what they are capable of becoming". The hospital gave the HRA employee handouts which describe the mission and values of the hospital. One statement in the handout is that staff members will welcome the consumer "immediately, introduce ourselves, and call you by name..." The hospital's Safety Checks policy states that "RRC assessment include the participation of the individual being assessed as well as the accompanying family/friends. Potential patient belongings, such as purse/briefcase are to be secured in the locked cabinet of the intake room. Individuals will be requested to use call phones only in designated areas."

## **Conclusion**

Pursuant to Section 2-102(a) of the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code, "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."

While the consumer's own recollection of what happened during the intake process should not be discredited, there was no supporting evidence to confirm that the consumer was not treated with kindness or understanding during the intake/admission process and she did not feel safe after she was separated from the support of her spouse; the allegation is unsubstantiated.

The HRA takes this opportunity to suggest that hospital personnel are cognizant of interactions with consumers who may be in emotional distress, providing reassurance when needed, and, if not already done, consider quality assurance mechanisms that might track staff interactions with consumers.