



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPORT OF FINDINGS—15-040-9006
CHRISTIAN FAMILY MINISTRIES
LAMB'S FOLD CENTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN
HUMAN RIGHTS AUTHORITY—South Suburban Region

[Case Summary— The Authority did not substantiate the complaint below. The public record on this case is recorded below; the provider did not provide a response to the report.]

INTRODUCTION

The South Suburban Human Rights Authority (HRA), the investigative division of the Illinois Guardianship & Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation into an allegation concerning Christian Family Ministries Lamb's Fold Center for Women and Children. The complaint stated that a recipient was unjustly terminated from the program and housing. If substantiated, this allegation would violate the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (the Code) (405 ILCS 5/2-102 [a]), the Illinois Administrative Code for Medicaid Community Mental Health Services Programs (59 Ill. Admin. Code Part 132 et seq.) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Facilities Supportive Housing Program (24 C.F.R. 583.300).

Located in Joliet, Christian Family Ministries Lamb's Fold Center for Women and Children serves homeless and abused women and their children by providing them with community-based supportive housing, personal recovery services, and assisting them to achieve self-sufficiency.

METHODOLOGY

To pursue the investigation, Lamb's Fold's Clinical Coordinator, the Intake and Community Services Outreach Coordinator, a Clinical Support Staff Person and a Clinical Student Intern were interviewed. The complaint was discussed with the recipient. Relevant policies were reviewed as were sections of the recipient's record with written consent.

COMPLAINT SUMMARY

The complaint stated that a recipient was given a discharge notice because she had missed an appointment with her case manager. It was reported that the recipient had been compliant with services in her treatment plan and that the alleged missed appointment had been changed to the following week as agreed by both parties.

FINDINGS

Information from record, interviews and program policies

According to the recipient's record, she was admitted to Lamb's Fold's transitional housing program with her three children in 2011, which was described as a dormitory like setting at that time. The family had been living in an emergency shelter prior to the recipient becoming a participant in the housing program. She was diagnosed with Major Depression with Severe Psychotic Features, Anxiety and some physical problems. On April 7th, 2014, the

interdisciplinary team met with the recipient to review her progress concerning her treatment goals and objectives. Her semi-annual "Individual Treatment and Support Plan" documented that she had made some progress regarding identifying her triggers for suicidal ideations. She had reported a decrease in depression and denied having any thoughts of harming self during the past six months. However, her symptom management goal was continued because of a concern that she was minimizing her depressive symptoms. Also, her objectives to develop coping skills to manage her worry thoughts and to comply with mental health services from a named provider were continued. Her treatment plan indicated that she had been employed for several weeks and that she did not desire to further her education or enroll in a vocational training program. Her independent living skill goal was revised to reflect that she would maintain part-time employment at the minimal for six months. Her interpersonal/social skill goal was continued because of little progress in appropriately expressing her feelings, parenting, and conflict management. Her plan recorded that she would receive one hour monthly of case management mental health services and client centered consultation services, and eight hours monthly of community support services. Her community support services hours would be decreased as she moved forward toward being totally independent. She signed her treatment plan on the staffing date.

For 2014, the HRA reviewed progress notes, notices and other documentation detailing that the recipient had failed to comply with her treatment plan and the program's rules. Also, her mental health deteriorated, and she had other problems. For May, a progress note recorded that the recipient's oldest son moved into the home with his mother and siblings for the summer and that his behaviors included defecating on self and smearing feces. The recipient reportedly was concerned because her youngest son had smeared feces on his bed after being with his older brother. She was encouraged to make an appointment with the appropriate agency or office to rule out possible medical problems concerning her oldest son. For June, the recipient presented with increased depression about problems involving her landlord such as him entering her home through a window because the front and back doors were locked with chains. On that next month, the recipient reportedly gave verbal consent for the staff to talk to her pastor about alternative housing but was moved to another house leased to Lamb's Fold. For August, the recipient was hospitalized because of a suicide attempt after her daughter told her that she had been molested. She was given a prescription for Lexapro and was referred to a local mental health center for outpatient therapy upon her hospital discharge on September 2nd.

The recipient was placed in Lamb's Fold's Focus Program on September 8th, which is designed for participants who exhibit problems with following the program guidelines. According to the "Focus Program Guidelines," a redirect form would be given to any participant who presents with difficulty following the program guidelines. It stated that redirect forms are used to help the participant to focus on their individualized treatment goals and to challenge the person to achieve them. A 30-day discharge notice would be given to vacate the home if the participant receives a redirect form in the Focus Program. We noticed that she was redirected for paying September's rent after she was placed in the program above. Her record contained a signed "Housing Memorandum of Understanding," completed on the date above, documenting but not limited to: 1) She would pay her rent by the 1st of each month per the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) formula, 2) Only her three children would live in the home with her, and, 3) All overnight guests must be approved by her case manager and may not stay overnight more than two consecutive nights. It documented that allowing guests to stay overnight without permission or for longer than approval are grounds for

immediate discharge from the program. On that same day, a signed "Supportive Housing Program Clinical Guidelines Agreement" documented that a redirect form would be given for each violation and that an accumulation of them would result in the recipient being discharged from the program. Included in the agreement were as follows:

1. To actively participate in case management services, to keep all schedule appointments, and to follow all recommendations in her treatment plan.
2. To attend all life skills didactic training and to follow recommendations.
3. To provide proof of income.
4. To take all medications as prescribed.
5. A discharge notice would be given if the staff determined that she was not benefitting from the program or case management services.

The agreement further stated that the recipient understood that she could be discharged from the program if she did not comply with all of the expectations as agreed. It recorded that Lamb's Fold has the right to withhold rent payments when a recipient is asked to leave the program. A 30-day notice would be given indicating that the monthly lease would not be renewed and the rent would not be paid for the following month.

The progress notes indicated that the police and the state child protection agency became involved with the family again in October. It was recorded that a school employee had observed bruises on the recipient's daughter's arm, and the child said that her mother had whooped her with a belt. When the police arrived at the recipient's home, she reportedly acknowledged hitting all three of her children with a belt seven times each. She said that she gave them "one lick" for every word in a Bible scripture that she recited while whooping them. However, her daughter told the police that she was hit 23 times, but her youngest son said that he was hit seven times and both of her sons had bruises on them. Also, her daughter reported that an uncle sometimes would stay overnight in the home with them. It was recorded that the recipient acknowledged allowing her male cousin to occasionally live in the home, although she had been informed that having an overnight male guest would violate the program rules. She was redirected for having an unapproved overnight guest in the home as stated above. She signed a "Statement Of Understanding" form indicating that a copy of her rights were provided and orally explained on October 17th.

For October, November and December, the recipient reportedly was redirected for not paying her rent timely; she refused to provide proof of income and did not keep her scheduled appointment with the staff twice. On December 18th, the recipient was given a 30-day eviction notice for multiple program violations and verbal and written redirections, including but not limited to:

1. Using corporal punishment on her children.
2. Consistently being late paying her rent, failure to provide proof of income and to schedule or keep appointments with the staff.
3. Unwillingness to make requested behavioral changes.
4. Late cancelation of appointments.
5. Failure to follow through with treatment appointments post-psychiatric hospitalization.
6. Unapproved male overnight guest.
7. Unwillingness to work with the staff to achieve goals in her services plan.
8. Concerns that the recipient required a higher level of care for her psychiatric problems.

Per the eviction notice, the recipient was asked to vacate the home by January 18th, 2015, and she was provided with four referrals for alternative housing. It was recorded that the

recipient refused to sign the discharge notice. Later, the discharge decision was rescinded, and she was placed on probation for 30 days on January 20th. According to the probation notice, the recipient would be given a 30-day discharge notice if she did not comply with the Housing Memorandum of Understanding and the program guidelines that she had previously signed. Also, the notice documented that the recipient had agreed:

1. To pay her rent for January 2015 and to provide proof of income for every month that she remained in the program.
2. To provide her work schedule weekly.
3. To sign a release of authorization for a local community mental health center to share information with the program staff.
4. To keep all appointments with the program staff and outside counseling services.
5. To refrain from using corporal punishment on her children.
6. To refrain from allowing guests to stay overnight in the home.

On January 27th, the redirect forms recorded that the recipient cancelled her appointment with her case manager, and she was informed that 24 hours prior notice must be given for all future cancellations. On that next month, she cancelled her appointment with her case manager again without giving adequate notice. Then, she failed to meet with another staff member concerning her rent. On March 11th, the recipient was given a 30-day eviction/discharge notice because she could not meet with the staff on March 9th as requested and would not be available until the following week. According to the notice, the staff were willing to meet with the recipient at her home, but her decision to put off the meeting was not acceptable. She was instructed to vacate the home by April 11th and to actively utilize the referrals provided to find alternative housing. Her record contained four community referrals for housing. The discharge notice documented that the recipient “was unable to sign” the form.

When the complaint was discussed with the staff, the HRA was informed that Lamb’s Fold’s supportive housing program is in partnership with a certain community behavioral health agency through a federal grant. We were told that Lamb’s Fold has six homes, five female clients, and twenty children in its program. Recipients were not provided with redirection forms when the program first started. The recipient struggled to comply with services and the rules as the program grew and more supportive services were added. The Clinical Coordinator explained that clients are required to meet with their case manager twice weekly and that the staff are willing to work with clients’ schedules. He reported that the recipient started to decompensate when her daughter was allegedly sexually abused. She was supposed to see a psychiatrist and a therapist at local mental health center. But, she did not see her outside therapist for three months, and she started to forget and cancel appointments with the program staff. She was not working when she stopped meeting with her case manager.

According to the staff, the monthly rent for the home was \$1248.00 and the recipient’s portion was \$375.00. Clients are required to pay at least \$25.00 monthly for rent if they are unemployed. Also, they are required to provide proof of income every month, but the recipient failed to do this. And, the staff later learned that family members gave her money that she did not report to them. We were told that the March 11th discharge notice was slid under the recipient’s front door because she did not respond when the case manager knocked on the door. The recipient was no longer in Lamb’s Fold’s supportive housing program. And, they do not know where the recipient and her children went after she was discharged from the program.

The recipient denied that she did not follow her services plan as reported by the staff. She said that her case manager had agreed to reschedule the weekly meeting for March 9th to the

following week. The staff gave her a 30-day discharge notice and said that she had missed her appointment with her case manager. This was the second discharge notice that she had received while in the program. The first discharge notice was rescinded after she had contacted an attorney. She reported that she was going to pursue legal help regarding the second discharge notice. Subsequently, the Clinical Director told the HRA that a judge had ruled in favor of Lamb's Fold on May 4th. He said that the recipient was on a monthly lease in the housing program and that Lamb's Fold has the right to terminate services to clients. Upon questioning, the investigation team was informed that only one other client has been discharged from the program in the past two years.

The program's right's statement includes the right: 1) to be treated fairly and with respect and dignity, 2) equal protection and due process, and, 3) to refuse medication including psychotropic medication.

Lamb's Fold's termination of services policy states that assistance may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

1. Criminal activity
2. Sale, possession or use of illegal drugs on the premises.
3. Theft
4. Child abuse or sexual abuse
5. Violence or the threat of violence
6. Threatening or aggressive behavior
7. Failure to comply with program guidelines and requirements

The policy includes procedures to appeal the discharge decision if a recipient is terminated from the supportive housing program. It states that the recipient may request that the Clinical Director reconsider the decision. If this fails, she may request a meeting with the program's Executive Director who shall have the final decision regarding this matter.

CONCLUSION

Section 5/2-102 (a) of the Mental Health 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.

According to assessment and termination criteria under HUD's Supportive Housing Program Section 583.300,

(d) Each recipient of assistance under this part must conduct an ongoing assessment of the supportive services required by the residents of the project and the availability of such services, and make adjustments as appropriate.

(i) The recipient may terminate assistance to a participant who violates program requirements or conditions of occupancy. Recipients must exercise judgment and examine all extenuating circumstances in determining when violations are serious enough to warrant termination. In terminating assistance to a participant, the recipient must provide a formal process, at a minimum, that consist of: 1) Written notice to the participant containing a clear statement of the reasons for termination; 2) A review of the decision, in which the participant is given the opportunity

to present written or oral objections before a person other than the person (or a subordinate of that person) who made or approved the termination decision and, (3) Prompt written notice of the final decision to the participant.

Pursuant to the Illinois Administrative Code Section 132.142 (d) (5),

The client or guardian has the right to present grievances up to and including the provider's executive director or comparable position. The provider shall maintain a record of such grievances and the response. The executive director's decision concerning the grievance shall constitute a final administrative decision (except when such decisions are reviewable by the provider's governing board, in which case the governing board's decision is final).

According to the Illinois Administrative Code Section 132.145 (f) (2), the client's record shall include referrals to other services and the provider's efforts regarding linkage to such services.

Based on the record and the staff interviewed, the Authority cannot substantiate the complaint stating that a recipient was unjustly terminated from Lamb's Fold program and housing. By documentation, the recipient failed to comply with services in her treatment plan, the program's rules such as mandatory weekly meetings with her case manager and other requirements. On December 18th, 2014, the recipient was given a discharge notice that documented many program violations and a concern that she required a higher level of care for her psychiatric problems. The notice was rescinded. She was placed on probation for 30 days on January 20th and agreed to comply with the Housing Memorandum of Understanding and the program guidelines. However, a March 11th discharge notice stated that she wanted to reschedule the weekly meeting with the staff until the following, which violated her agreement to follow all the program rules. No clear violations of the Code's Section 5/2-102 (a), the Supportive Housing Program Rules in Section 583.300, the Illinois Administrative Code Section 132.145 (f) (2) or the program's policies were found.

SUGGESTION

1. The Authority must caution the provider to clearly document its efforts regarding linkage to other services as required under the Illinois Administrative Code Section 132.145 (f) (2).