



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
Westlake Community Hospital
HRA #15-100-9015

The North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation of alleged rights violations at Westlake Community Hospital. In February 2015, the HRA notified Westlake of its intent to conduct an investigation, pursuant to the Guardianship and Advocacy Act (20 ILCS 3955). The complaint accepted for investigation was that a consumer was not permitted to make telephone calls at reasonable times and she was told that her telephone rights would be “cut off” if she continued to ask to use the telephone.

If found substantiated, the allegations would violate the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5/2-103).

To pursue this investigation, a site visit was conducted at which time the allegation was discussed with the hospital's Director of Quality and Behavioral Health and the Program's Director. The HRA reviewed hospital policies relevant to the allegation and reviewed a consumer's clinical record with consent. After meeting with hospital personnel, the HRA interviewed two patients. The HRA acknowledges the full cooperation of hospital personnel.

Background

Westlake Hospital is a 282-bed facility located in Melrose Park. The hospital's Mental Health and Addiction services provide comprehensive care for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors in both inpatient and outpatient settings. The services include emergency/crisis care, a 25-bed inpatient treatment program, outpatient therapy, short and long-term residential programs and home visits.

Findings

The clinical record revealed data on an adult female admitted to the hospital on December 26, 2014; she was discharged on January 7, 2015. Admission notes documented that the consumer arrived to the unit alert/oriented, ambulatory and with a steady gait. She was noted to be calm and cooperative and with a very short attention span. Her behavior was noted to be hyperactive and guarded, with a pleasant mood; the note indicated that she was oriented to the unit.

There was only one progress note located in the clinical record that addressed telephone calls, and this note simply stated that she was on the telephone cursing her mother out.

The hospital's Use of Telephones in the Psychiatric Department policy states that a patient on the inpatient psychiatric unit shall be permitted unimpeded, private and uncensored communication with persons of his choice by telephone. The policy further states that telephones are available on the unit for patients to receive and make phone calls. Patients are informed of phone time through a posted schedule and communication at the daily community meeting. Patients may make or receive calls at any time to and/or from the Guardianship and Advocacy Commission, to and/or from legal counsel, to and/or from clergy, and to and/or from government officials. The use of the telephone by a patient may be reasonably restricted by the physician only in order to protect the patient or others from harm, harassment or intimidation. The physician will

provide an order from the restriction of communication, stating the affected party and the rationale for the restriction. Once telephone communication is restricted, the patient shall be advised of his right to notify the affected party of the restriction. In addition, the affected party will be notified once the restriction is removed, staff will complete the restriction of rights document and distribute the copies as directed.

The hospital's employees Code of Conduct policy states that employees are subject to immediate discharge, even for a first-time offense, for various policy violations including , but not limited to..."fighting with, attacking, threatening, intimidating, or interfering with employees, patients, managers or other individuals at any time; jeopardizing the health or safety of patients or employees for any reason."

At the site visit, it was stated that this consumer is well-known to program staff and that phone usage has never been a problem. It was also stated that upon receipt of the HRA notification letter, the program Director spoke with unit staff members, as well as the consumer's Social Worker and attending Psychiatrist. It was reported that the consumer did not necessarily use the phone all that much and no one recalled having any problems concerning the telephone. When asked, it was stated that a consumer would receive a communication restriction when the hospital received notification from an outside source asking that the calls be stopped. It was offered that the two unit phones are available all day and evening, except when the program is conducting therapeutic groups.

The HRA interviewed two consumers and both stated that they use the phone and have not had any problems with incoming or outgoing calls.

Conclusion

Pursuant to the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code, Section 2-103, "Except as provided in this Section, 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"

Based on the information obtained, it is concluded that rights were not violated; the allegation is unsubstantiated.