



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
HRA #16-100-9011
Elgin Mental Health Center

Introduction

The North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) opened this investigation regarding Elgin Mental Health Center (hereafter referred to as Center), Forensic Treatment Program after receiving a complaint of alleged rights violations. The complaint accepted for investigation was that the Pharmacy Department is arbitrarily dictating the medication treatment courses for some patients which are not in the best interest of the patients. The rights of patients receiving services at the Center are protected by the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Code (405 ILCS 5).

Patients receiving services at EMHC's Forensic Treatment Program have been remanded by Illinois County Courts to the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) under statutes finding them Unfit to Stand Trial (UST) and Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI). Placement evaluations determine the most appropriate inpatient or outpatient setting for forensic treatment based on a number of factors including age, gender, mental health diagnosis, and security need. Unless a person is specifically ordered to receive services in an outpatient setting, court ordered referrals under state forensic statutes call for placement in a secure inpatient setting. The Forensic Treatment Program has 344 beds.

Methodology

The HRA discussed the allegation with the Director of Pharmacy. The allegation was also discussed with the anonymous complainant.

Findings

It was reported to the HRA that the Pharmacy Department reviews the medicines that the psychiatrists prescribe for the patient, and they pay special attention to "polypharmacy" (multiple antipsychotic medicines). In the past several months the scrutiny seems to have increased, and the Pharmacy Department is dictating what the psychiatrist can and cannot prescribe. It was stated that there is a process for the psychiatrist to submit an exemption request and sometimes those are granted, but at other times they are denied.

At the site visit, the Director of Pharmacy stated that they cannot dictate the patient's treatment course. Should medications be non-formulary or prescribed medicines be contraindicated with already prescribed medications, the Pharmacy Department must bring that to the attention of the physician. The Director stated that pharmacy personnel do not (or rarely) attend individual

patient staffings. They become involved when the physician requests a medication review and they are involved in addressing polypharmacy. And, the medication dosage is monitored – as an example, should a patient be admitted to the hospital on a dose of medication that is above the accepted standard, the Pharmacy Department will address this.

The HRA noted that documentation from a previous case on a similar issue indicated that the pharmacy department was directing the decrease of one of the two prescribed antipsychotics. It was noted that the physician exemption request for polypharmacy was denied and that the overall goal from pharmacy was to discontinue one antipsychotic.

The Center’s Medication policy states that, “Intra-class Polypharmacy- Whereas multidrug regimens are common treatment strategies for individuals with serious mental illness, it is not ordinarily clinically indicated to concurrently prescribe two (2) or more psychotropic medications of the same class. However, the use of multiple psychotropic medications of the same class is sometimes needed in difficult situations. Such activity requires prior written authorization from the Chair of the DHS Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee.” The policy also states that “An order for medication appearing on the approved list distributed by the DHS Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee, but in dosage above the established maximum dose limit, shall require prior authorization from the DHS Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee.”

Conclusion

The Mental Health Code calls for adequate and humane care pursuant to an individual service plan. (405 ILCS 5/2-102a). An individual service plan must be tailored to each individual patient needs, which would include (if applicable) medication. It is concluded that the Pharmacy Department is not arbitrarily dictating the medication treatment courses for some patients which are not in the best interest of the patients. The Pharmacy Department is adhering to Center policy which states that it is not clinically indicated to concurrently prescribe two or more psychotropic medications of the same class and that medication dosage above the established maximum dose limit must require prior authorization.

Suggestion

The HRA suggests that the Pharmacy Department discuss this policy with patients and unit staff members so that it is understood that Pharmacy recommendations are not made arbitrarily.

RESPONSE

Notice: The following page(s) contain the provider response. Due to technical requirements, some provider responses appear verbatim in retyped format.



Illinois Department of Human Services

Bruce Rauner, Governor

James T. Dimas, Secretary

**Division of Mental Health – Region 2
Elgin Mental Health Center**

RECOVERY IS OUR VISION

Recovery is a Personal Journey of Hope, Healing, Growth, Choice, and Change

May 23, 2016

Ms. Patricia Getchell, Chairperson
North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority
9511 Harrison Street, Room 335
Des Plaines, IL 60016-1565

Re: 16-100-9011

Dear Ms. Getchell:

We are pleased that this allegation was found to be non-substantiated and appreciate your thorough review.

The suggestion provided will be followed through in a timely manner. The Pharmacy Director will work in conjunction with all medical staff toward a better understanding of the policies and procedures, as well as the continued goal of quality patient care. The Pharmacy Director or Clinical Pharmacist designee will meet with the FTP Patient Council to give an overview of the role of Pharmacy as well as Polypharmacy.

I would request that this response be attached to the report and be included in any public release of your Report of Findings.

Sincerely,

Meredith Kiss, M.A.
Hospital Administrator

MK/AS/tms