



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Suburban Human Rights Authority
Report of Findings
Amita Health
Adventist GlenOaks Hospital
HRA #16-100-9017

The North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority (HRA) of the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission has completed its investigation of alleged rights violations at Adventist GlenOaks Hospital. In August 2016, the HRA notified GlenOaks of its intent to conduct an investigation, pursuant to the Guardianship and Advocacy Act (20 ILCS 3955). The complaint accepted for investigation was that staff members on the behavioral health unit unjustly restricted some correspondence written by a patient from being mailed to the intended parties.

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 allegations were discussed with hospital personnel. Because a specific name was not provided, the HRA focused its investigation on provider policy and practice. Thus, the HRA requested and reviewed the hospital's Patient's Rights policy.

Background

According to its web-site, Adventist GlenOaks Hospital is a faith-based, non-profit organization backed by the Adventist Health System, one of the nation's top ten health systems. The hospital offers a full range of services, including emergency care, cardiology and cardiac catheterization, electrophysiology, interventional radiology, surgery, behavioral health, oncology, obstetrics, digital mammography, diagnostic imaging and more. The hospital is a Level II Trauma Center, an Accredited Chest Pain Center, Joint Commission Accredited and Chest Pain Center Certified.

Adventist GlenOaks Hospital has nearly 60 beds (hospital rooms) designated for patients with behavioral health concerns. Adults experiencing acute crises or ongoing or serious mental illness may be admitted to the inpatient treatment program. Physician-directed programs offer intensive, holistic care on a short-term basis. The inpatient Behavioral Health Center includes four hospital units focusing on the different needs of specific patient groups. Within each unit, staff and programs are targeted to the unique needs of that patient sector. Specialized units include:

1. Geriatric patients, including diagnoses of Alzheimer's and other dementias.
2. Chronic (long-term) psychiatric disorders.
3. Acute (crisis oriented) mental health issues.
4. Less severe or shorter-term needs.

Findings

The hospital's policy that addresses communication states (in part) that "patients shall be permitted unimpeded, private, and uncensored communication with person of his/her choice by mail, telephone and visitation. Unimpeded, private and uncensored communication may be reasonable restricted by physician order in order to protect the patient or others from harm, harassment or intimidation, provided that notice of such restriction shall be given to all patients upon admission. A physician's order must be obtained every twenty-four (24) hours if renewal is indicated for such restriction and a 'Notice Regarding Restricted Rights of Individuals' must be completed with each physician order."

At the site visit, when asked about the criteria for communication restriction, the above noted policy was reiterated. It was further stated that a communication restriction by telephone or mail would occur when, for example, the patient repeatedly made harassing phone calls/sent letters and the receiving party contacted the hospital and asked that the communication be stopped. This would be documented in the patient's clinical record and a Notice of Rights Restriction would be completed. Regarding mail, it was stated that the facility provides stamps and envelopes and all mail is mailed without inspection or inquiry. An example given when mail might be restricted was if a patient disclosed the letter contents, for instance suicidal ideation. It was stated that if this occurred, staff members would hold the mail and contact the physician for further instructions. It was stated that the average length of stay is about six days. Patients do not often write letters and the hospital does have computer access for patients to communication via electronic mail.

It was stated that employees are trained on patient rights during orientation.

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. (a) The facility director shall ensure that correspondence can be conveniently received and mailed, that telephones are reasonably accessible, and that space for visits is available. Writing materials, postage and telephone usage funds shall be provided in reasonable amounts to recipients who reside in Department facilities and who are unable to procure such items. (b) Reasonable times and places for the use of telephones and for visits may be established in writing by the facility director. (c) Unimpeded, private and uncensored communication by mail, telephone, and visitation may be reasonably restricted by the facility director only in order to protect the recipient or others from harm, harassment or intimidation, provided that notice of such restriction shall be given to all recipients upon admission."

The hospital provides stamps, envelopes and patients have access to a computer for email correspondence. Policy states that communication may only be restricted pursuant to a physician's order and this order is reviewed every 24 hours. Based on the information obtained, it is concluded that patient rights are protected.

RESPONSE

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

September 19, 2016

Mr. Arthur A. Savage, Vice Chairperson
North Suburban Regional Human Rights Authority
North Suburban Regional Office
9511 Harrison Street, Room 335
Des Plaines, IL 60016-1565

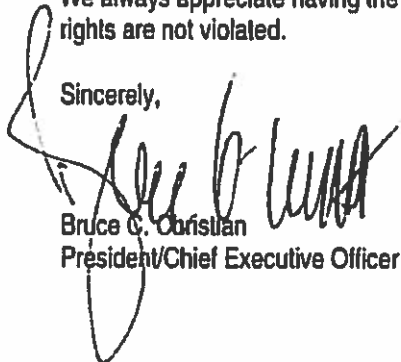
RE: HRA #16-100-9017

Dear Mr. Savage:

Thank you for your letter, dated September 7, 2016 regarding the unsubstantiated findings of the investigation into the above referenced case and that patient rights are protected.

We always appreciate having the opportunity to work with the Human Rights Authority to ensure patient rights are not violated.

Sincerely,



Bruce C. Christian
President/Chief Executive Officer