

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Title: Mental Health Aide

Class Code: 70332
Pay Grade: GE

A. Purpose:

Performs personal care services by completing patient care assignments, providing an atmosphere conducive to treatment, and listening to and helping psychiatric and chemically dependent patients deal with their problems in an effort to meet the patients' physical and emotional needs.

B. Distinguishing Feature:

The Mental Health Aide performs personal care services and provides care to adolescents, chemically dependent patients, acute patients, chronic patients, and geriatric/psychiatric patients; completes patient care assignments; provides an atmosphere conducive to treatment; documents and reports observations of patient behavior; reports when vital signs are not within normal limits; and decides when to initiate emergency codes.

The Mental Health Assistant provides assistance in unit management, which includes overseeing completion of patient care assignments, monitors Mental Health Aides' compliance with policies and procedures, in addition to performing basic nursing care skills. The Mental Health Technician develops, conducts, and monitors education, training, counseling, leisure, and/or recreation programs prescribed by a treatment team; assists in implementing, assessing, revising, and documenting treatment plans; and provides feedback concerning patients responses, problems, and progress.

C. Functions:

(These are examples only; any one position may not include all of the listed examples nor do the listed examples include all functions which may be found in positions of this class.)

1. Performs personal care services and utilizes listening skills to meet physical and emotional needs of psychiatric patients.
 - a. Observes patients for choking, seizures, fluid output, and temperature change or skin irritation and reports unusual symptoms to medical personnel.
 - b. Assists patients with personal care to include bathing, shaving, nail care, shampoos, dressing, toileting, and related hygiene needs.
 - c. Applies soothing skin lotion and massage as needed.
 - d. Escorts patients to recreation activities, workshops, classes, lab, meals, library, field trips, medical appointments, bank, downtown, etc.
 - e. Takes and records patients' temperature, blood pressure, respiration, pulse rates, and obtains urine specimens.
 - f. Distributes and feeds patients meals and snacks.
 - g. Completes patient care assignments.
 - h. Repositions bed-ridden patients.
 - i. Participates in and supervises patients' educational, group, leisure, and recreational activities.
 - j. Assist with range of motion, exercise, and walking patients.
2. Maintains a safe environment on the unit by performing housekeeping tasks and unit duties to provide an atmosphere conducive to treatment.
 - a. Changes or assists patients in changing bedding.

- b. Distributes clean laundry.
 - c. Changes soiled clothing of patients.
 - d. Stocks closets and patients' personal care boxes.
 - e. Assists in cleaning the unit area.
 - f. Teaches patients proper hygiene, housekeeping skills and basic cooking skills.
3. Maintains patients' records to provide a legal, permanent, and accurate account of the patients' treatment and response to treatment.
 - a. Completes reports and records patients' behaviors, changes in conditions, and special incidents.
 - b. Files forms and reports in patients' charts.
 - c. Receives and gives shift report, when directed.
 - d. Attends patient treatment team meetings to provide input on patients' progress.
 4. Communicates patient or unit related data by reporting observations of potential problem situations to provide the supervisor with information necessary for treatment and program planning.
 5. Performs therapeutic interaction with patients to assist the patients in dealing with their problems and to resolve conflicts among patients.
 - a. Conducts one-to-one supportive sessions with patients.
 - b. Motivates patients to participate in and assists with unit activities.
 - c. Serves as a positive role model to patients.
 6. Searches for patients who are unaccounted for to prevent them from hurting themselves or others.
 - a. Copes with upset, unmanageable patients.
 - b. Initiates emergency codes and measures.
 - c. Assists with restraining or secluding patients in emergency situations as directed by a Registered Nurse.
 - d. Orders patient care and office supplies.
 - e. Counts and records controlled substance supply as assigned.
 7. Performs other work as assigned.

D. Reporting Relationships:

May provide work direction to new Mental Health Aides to provide training, as assigned.

E. Challenges and Problems:

Challenges include dealing with patients' widely diversified, unpredictable, explosive, verbal and physical abusive behaviors; restraining and secluding patients in emergency situations as directed by a Registered Nurse; lifting patients who are heavy and unable to assist with moving or repositioning themselves; having to clean patients who lack bladder and/or bowl control; and caring for and feeding resistive patients.

Typical problems include learning the behavior problems of each patient on their unit and how to manage each patient individually; trying to motivate patients with low self-esteem, lacking in social skills, confused, unable to deal with and accept reality, and/or manipulative behavior; patients with drug or alcohol dependency; and dealing with a range of patients from adolescents to geriatric patients.

F. Decision-making Authority:

Decisions include the positioning of patients in beds and wheelchairs; when a patient needs personal hygiene; when intervention or assistance is needed because a patient is being abusive; and in what order to perform such personal care activities such as bathing, feeding, and dressing; whether vital signs are within normal limits; what to do to help a patient relax who can't sleep; when to initiate emergency codes; determining what patient behaviors should be charted and/or reported; determining whether or not patient needs assistance or guidance with personal care or other activities; whether to intervene with patients' behavior; whether to summon staff for assistance; and determining how to approach a patient.

Decisions referred are determining treatment for patients who are ill or injured; dealing with unusual or difficult behavior problems; decisions regarding medication or treatments; decisions regarding restraint or seclusion; whether or not to admit, transfer, or discharge a patient; and communications with patients' relatives or legal counsel.

G. Contact with Others:

Daily contact with patients to provide personal care services; and nurses, physicians, therapists, and teachers to receive instructions on patient care techniques and assignments and to provide observations on patient behavior. Occasional contact with patients' friends and relatives when they are visiting.

H. Working Conditions:

The incumbent works with psychiatric and chemical dependency patients who may be unpredictable, unmanageable, and verbally and physically abusive both to other patients and employees (biting, scratching, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, pinching, spitting, and swearing). Physical assaults by patients are not unusual. Incumbents must be able to lift heavy patients, many of whom are unable to assist with being moved or repositioned and must be moved from chairs to beds.

I. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

Knowledge of:

- basic physical and psychological needs of the mentally ill and chemically dependent;
- patient safety procedures;
- patient rights.

Ability to:

- accurately observe, recognize, report, and record physical symptoms and significant behavioral characteristics of patients;
- carry out individual program plans for treatment of patients;
- relate to and work constructively with patients;
- detect significant or unusual patient behavior;
- verbalize the needs of patients;
- provide personal care services to patients;
- follow oral and written instructions and established policies and procedures;
- listen and be empathetic with patients;

- assist in lifting and moving of patients;
- deal with aggressive behavior;
- communicate information clearly and concisely;
- lift and move patients.